



Lead is a poison with serious health effects for adults

Recent studies show that even small amounts of lead can cause health problems in adults. Most adults with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick.

Lead poisoning may cause:

- Headaches
- Constipation
- Stomach cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue
- Trouble sleeping
- Irritability
- Muscle or joint pain

Exposure over a long time may also cause:

- Kidney damage
- High blood pressure
- Reproductive damage
- Nerve disorders
- Brain damage

Pregnant women and young children are also at risk.

Lead exposure during pregnancy may cause:

- High blood pressure
- Miscarriage
- Babies born too soon or too small
- Learning and behavior problems in a child

Lead exposure in children may be associated with learning and behavior problems, and delayed growth and development.

Lead exposure comes from breathing lead dust or eating items with lead in them.

- Lead dust or fumes can be breathed in or accidentally swallowed from these activities:
 - Scraping, sanding or using a heat gun to remove old lead-based paint
 - Cable splicing
 - Target shooting
 - Furniture restoration or repair
 - Stained glass work
 - Soldering and electronics repair
 - Metal recycling
- Certain imported products such as [herbal medicines](#), foods and spices, or food prepared or served in imported clay pots and dishes may contain lead.
- Paint chips, soil, clay and crushed pottery may also contain lead.

These are just a few of the possible ways to get exposed to lead. To see if you are at risk, fill out an [adult lead self-assessment](#) form.

Ask your doctor about a blood lead test.

Talk to your doctor about getting a blood lead test if you think you have been exposed. A blood lead test is the only way to find out if you have been exposed to lead.

- Employers must provide regular blood lead tests to workers exposed to lead on the job.
- Any adult at risk for lead exposure from work, hobbies or use of lead-containing products should get a blood lead test.
- All pregnant women must be screened for exposure to lead at their first prenatal visit.
- All children must be tested at ages 1 and 2.

A blood lead level of 5 µg/dL or higher means you have been exposed to lead. As blood lead levels increase, the potential for health effects increases.

Protect yourself and your family.

Keep away from lead

ALWAYS:

- Wash your hands and face before eating or drinking.
- Never eat or drink in areas where you work with lead.

AT WORK:

- Use lead-safe work practices and engineering controls to prevent exposure to lead.
- Use wet cleaning methods and HEPA vacuums to clean work areas. Never dry sweep or use compressed air.
- Wear a proper respirator and keep it clean.
- Use separate clothes and boots for work.
- Wash and shower before leaving work.

AT HOME:

- Avoid using herbal medicines, foods, spices and [cosmetics](#) that may contain lead.
- Avoid using ceramic pots, dishes, bowls and cups from other countries to cook, serve or store food.
- Never eat non-food items such as paint chips, soil, clay, and crushed pottery.
- Wash work clothes separately from the family laundry if someone in your household works with lead.

WHILE DOING HOBBIES:

- Alternatives to lead are available for most hobbies; use them whenever possible.
- Work in a clean, well-ventilated area.

For more information about lead poisoning call 311 or go to nyc.gov/health.