

# Work Safe!



**What Construction  
Workers Should Know  
About Lead Poisoning**

**Lead paint is a health hazard found at many construction sites.**

## **Lead Poisoning Has Serious Health Effects**

Most adults with lead poisoning do not feel or look sick. Here are some symptoms they may feel:

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

Exposure to lead for a long time may cause:

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

### **What Your Blood Lead Test Means**

**5 mcg/dL:** You have been exposed to lead

**10 mcg/dL:** You need follow-up blood lead testing

**25 mcg/dL:** You need more protection or should be removed from lead work





## Workers Are Exposed By Breathing Lead Dust Or Lead Fumes

Lead dust on workers' hands can be accidentally swallowed while eating, drinking or smoking.

Painters, ironworkers, laborers and demolition crews working on lead-painted structures are most at risk. These activities may expose workers to high lead levels:

- Abrasive blasting
- Torch-cutting, burning and welding
- Using grinders, sanders, needle guns, scalers and other power tools
- Rivet busting
- Dry scraping and sanding
- Cleaning up lead-contaminated work areas

## Workers Can Help Prevent Lead Poisoning

- Use safe work practices and engineering controls.
- 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.
- Wash hands and face before eating, drinking and smoking. Never eat, drink or smoke in the work area.
- Use separate clothes and boots for work.
- Get regular blood lead tests.

# Employers Are Required to Protect Workers From Exposure To Lead

## Employers must:

- Use safe work practices and engineering controls to protect workers
- Inspect lead work areas and test the air for lead
- Keep work areas clean
- Provide:
  - Proper respirators and protective clothing
  - Hand-washing stations and showers
  - Clean areas for taking breaks, eating and changing clothes
- Train workers about workplace lead hazards and ways to prevent lead exposure
- Provide regular blood lead tests
- Provide medical exams to workers exposed to lead if they have:
  - A blood lead level of 40 mcg/dL or higher
  - Lead poisoning symptoms
  - Concerns about their ability to have a healthy child
- Remove workers from lead work if their blood lead level is higher than the mandatory removal level

## Employer Best Practices

**Health effects from lead exposure can occur below the mandatory removal level. Many employers offer workers additional protection by:**

- Providing monthly blood lead testing
- Keeping track of blood lead levels
- Improving worker protections if blood lead levels increase
- Removing workers from lead work if their blood lead level is 25 mcg/dL or higher



## Protect Your Family From Lead Poisoning

Lead that is brought home on work clothes and equipment can cause learning and behavior problems in young children.

- Wash and shower before leaving work.
- Change out of work clothes and boots before going home or getting into your car.
- Wash work clothes separately from other household laundry.
- Ask a doctor about testing family members.
- Make sure that all children get tested for lead poisoning at ages 1 and 2.



## Prevent Lead Poisoning

- Use Safe Work Practices
- Get Tested for Lead
- Protect your Family:  
Leave Lead at Work

**Employers must provide a safe and healthy workplace.**

**For more information:**  
**Call 311** or go to **[nyc.gov/health](https://nyc.gov/health)**