

lead in the workplace

120 different jobs expose workers to lead. Industries include:

- > making & recycling batteries
- > tearing down old structures
- > home renovation/remodels
- > burning, scraping or sanding old paint
- > steel bridge maintenance
- > making & repairing radiators
- > brass, copper or lead foundry
- > lead production or smelting
- > casting with lead, brass or bronze
- > lead soldering
- > scrap metal handling
- > making lead fishing weights
- > indoor gun ranges
- > ceramics & some plastics operations
- > refinery

What Lead Does to the Body

Lead can enter your body in two ways — *breathing and eating*. You can breathe in lead dust, mist, or fumes. You can swallow lead dust if it gets on your hands, clothing, or beard, (and is transferred to) your food, drinks, or cigarettes.

Once lead gets into your body it stays there for a long time. Even if exposed to small amounts, it can build up in the body over time. Too much lead in your body can damage the brain, nerves, kidneys, blood cells, and/or reproductive system.

Each person responds differently. Some of the symptoms of lead poisoning or exposure are:

- > irritability
- > stomach aches & cramps
- > muscle or joint pains
- > trouble concentrating
- > tiredness

Many people with high lead levels do not feel sick or poisoned. These high lead levels can still seriously affect health. The longer you have a high level, the greater the risk that health problems may happen. Sometimes, the damage is permanent.



Lead Outside the Workplace

Workers can take lead dust home on clothes and shoes. This may affect the health of others in the family. Lead is more dangerous in children than in adults. Make sure your children under age 6 are tested for lead poisoning. Unborn babies are also affected by lead. Pregnant women should also be tested.

Protect Yourself with Safe Work Practices

Tips for protecting yourself & your family from lead exposure:

- > Don't eat, drink or smoke in your work area.
- > Wash hands & face before you eat, drink or smoke.
- > Wear protective equipment over clothing when you work with lead.
- > Store street clothes in a separate locker from your work clothes.
- > Don't wear work clothes and shoes/boots home. Dust on clothes can contaminate the home and harm your children.
- > If possible, shower and wash hair at work before going home.
- > Launder clothes at work. If you must take clothes home, wash and dry separately.
- > Wear a clean, properly-fitted respirator in all areas exposed to lead dust or fumes.
- > Avoid stirring up (dry sweeping or blowing) dust that contains lead. Wet cleaning and mopping are generally safer.
- > Eat a well-balanced diet. Proper nutrition can help reduce lead levels. A diet high in iron and calcium will help to reduce lead absorption.

For More Information
National Lead
Information Center
1.800.424.LEAD

National Institute for
Occupational Safety
and Health (NIOSH)
1.800.356.4674

Lead Poisoning Prevention
Program, Oklahoma State
Department of Health
405.271.6617



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