



What Adults Should Know About Lead Poisoning



Lead is a dangerous metal that can harm children and adults. Lead exposure can cause:

- Learning and behavioral problems in children
- High blood pressure
- Brain or kidney damage
- Reproductive health issues, such as abnormal sperm, erectile dysfunction (impotence), infertility (inability to have children) and miscarriage (loss of pregnancy)

Lead can enter your body when you breathe in lead dust or fumes, put your hands in your mouth after touching surfaces or products that have or contain lead, or eat products that contain lead.

Most people with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick. A blood lead test is the only way to know if you have been exposed to lead.

Sources of Lead

The workplace is the most common source of lead exposure for adults who are not pregnant. High-risk jobs and hobbies include:

- Cleaning up areas contaminated with lead
- Constructing or demolishing buildings, bridges or tunnels
- Using power tools on metal that contains lead (for example, abrasive blasting and torch cutting)
- Dry-scraping, dry-sanding, soldering, welding, or melting paints or products that contain lead
- Recycling batteries, electronics or scrap metal
- Renovating homes or buildings built before 1978
- Repairing automobiles, boats or electronics
- Restoring or repairing antiques, including furniture
- Working with or firing bullets that contain lead
- Making bullets or fishing sinkers
- Using paints, pigments or glazes that contain lead
- Working with stained glass, pottery or jewelry
- Lead smelting

If you work with or around lead, your employer should take these steps to reduce your lead exposure:

- Provide lead safety trainings and personal protective equipment, such as protective clothing, respirators and fit testing.
- Keep lead work areas separate from areas without lead, and provide clean areas for eating and changing clothes.
- Provide hand-washing stations and showers.
- Use exhaust ventilation and other tools to reduce lead dust and fumes.
- Offer regular blood lead tests.

Talk to your employer if you think you may be exposed to lead at your job. If your employer does not fix the problem, call the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at 800-321-6742 and ask them to inspect your workplace, or submit a complaint at [osha.gov/contactus](https://www.osha.gov/contactus). OSHA will not tell your employer who contacted them.



Other sources of lead are more common among adults who are pregnant. These include:

- Some traditional consumer products, such as health remedies, foods and spices, cosmetics and religious powders, cookware, and dishware
- Nonfood items, such as clay, soil, crushed pottery and paint chips, if put in your mouth

For more information on products to avoid, visit nyc.gov/hazardousproducts.



Protect Yourself and Your Family from Lead

While working or doing hobbies:

- Do not eat, drink or smoke in work areas.
- Wash your hands and face before eating, drinking or smoking.
- Use supplies that do not contain lead whenever possible.
- Wear protective clothing and a clean, properly fitted, air-purifying respirator.

- Use safe work practices and wet cleaning methods to reduce dust.
- Never dry-sand or dry-scrape paint.
- Change out of your work clothes and shoes before going home or getting in your car. Keep work clothes in a separate bag.
- Wash and shower before leaving work.





To avoid bringing lead into your home:

- Wash your hands before eating, drinking or smoking.
- Remove your shoes before entering your home.
- Avoid using traditional consumer products known to contain lead.
- Never eat or chew nonfood items.
- Wash work clothes separately if you or someone in your home has a job or hobby that involves lead.

Ask your health care provider for a blood lead test if you think you or someone in your home is at risk for lead exposure. For help finding a provider, call **311**.

For more information, visit **nyc.gov/lead**.