



## How can I protect myself and my family?

- Wash your hands and face before eating or drinking at work.
- Don't smoke in the work area.
- Wear proper protective equipment such as a fitted respirator and gloves when working around lead dust or fumes.
- When finished working for the day, shower at work or immediately once you get home.
- Change into clean clothes and shoes at work before you go home.
- If possible, wash your clothes at work. If not, wash work clothes separate from other clothes and then run the empty washing machine again to rinse out lead contamination.
- If available, participate in your employer's lead screening program if you are at risk for lead poisoning.
- Keep your work area and home clean by using a wet cloth to clean horizontal surfaces, and a mop to clean floors. An alternative cleaning tool would be an RRP approved HEPA vacuum that is specifically designed to clean up lead contaminants.
- Assume that a house built before 1978 contains lead-based paint. Use safe work practices or hire a professional when renovating a home built before 1978.

### For more information

If you would like more information regarding lead poisoning prevention, please contact us at:

### Office of Environmental Health Hazards & Indoor Air

Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services  
301 Centennial Mall South  
PO Box 95026  
Lincoln, NE 68509-5026

**(402) 471-0386 or  
1-888-242-1100**

[www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead](http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead)

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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PREVENTING

# Lead Poisoning in Adults



Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services  
Division of Public Health



# What is lead poisoning?

**L**ead is a toxic metal used in many industries and found in many consumer products. Lead poisoning can occur when lead builds up in the body. No amount of lead in the body is considered safe.

## Am I at risk for lead exposures?

**Many jobs and work activities involve lead. You may be at risk if you:**

- Melt, cast, or grind lead, brass, or bronze
- Make ammunition, fire guns, or work at a shooting range
- Work with scrap metal or electronics
- Scrape, sand, remove or handle lead-based paint or products painted with it
- Tear down or renovate old buildings or bridges
- Make or repair batteries, radiators, or automobiles
- Make or work with ceramics, jewelry, or stained glass

**Some lead exposures are due to hobbies, including:**

- Shooting in indoor ranges
- Making bullets or fishing sinkers
- Making pottery, stained glass, or jewelry
- Home renovations and furniture refinishing

There are other less common sources of lead exposure in adults, such as imported candy and using alternative or folk medicines.



**! This worker is not wearing proper protective equipment and is at risk for lead exposure.**

## How can lead poisoning affect my health?

Lead exposures usually occur by swallowing lead dust, or breathing in dust and fumes containing lead. Once lead is in the body, it can be stored in your organs and bones. Lead can cause serious and permanent damage to your kidneys, brain, nervous system, cardiovascular system, reproductive system and other parts of the body. Too much lead can even cause coma or death.

**Lead exposures can cause:**

- High blood pressure
- Decreased sex drive, infertility
- Digestive problems
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tiredness or weakness
- Hearing and vision problems

Your body may not show many signs or symptoms of lead exposure until serious damage is done, and these symptoms can be easy to misread.

## How do I know if I am exposed to lead?

A simple blood test can measure how much lead is in your blood. This is known as a blood lead level (BLL). If you think you are exposed to lead at work or at home, ask your doctor for a blood lead test. Scientists and doctors recommend that blood lead levels in adults be kept below 10 µg/dL, and levels should be kept below 5 µg/dL for women who are pregnant or may become pregnant. However, no amount of lead in the body is considered safe.

## What is take-home lead?

People who have jobs or hobbies that involve lead can bring lead dust into their homes on work clothes, skin, or equipment. This is called 'take home lead' and it can expose anyone who comes in contact with it. Take home lead can even cause lead poisoning in children who live in or visit the house.

For more information on take-home lead, call 1-888-242-1100 or visit <http://www.dhhs.ne.gov/lead>

