

Prevent Lead Poisoning

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF LEAD POISONING?

Lead poisoning has many signs and symptoms, some of them are listed below. However, the signs and symptoms of lead poisoning may not appear until permanent damage to your health has already occurred, if they appear at all. If you work around lead, you should tell your doctor and your children's doctor. Your doctor may want to take periodic blood tests to check for lead poisoning. If you suspect that you may have lead poisoning, whether or not you have any of the following signs and symptoms, you should see your doctor as soon as possible or call the lead registry for assistance.

Early Signs and Symptoms of Lead Poisoning

- Fatigue
- Headache
- Uneasy stomach
- Sleeplessness
- Irritability or nervousness
- Metallic taste
- Reproductive problems
- Poor appetite

Later Signs and Symptoms

- Aches or pains in stomach
- Memory problems
- Muscle and joint pains
- Constipation
- Weak wrists or ankles
- Nausea
- Kidney problems
- Weight loss

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE TOO MUCH LEAD IN MY BODY?

You will need a blood lead test to show whether your body has absorbed dangerous amounts of lead. A high blood lead is an indication that you are absorbing lead faster than your body can eliminate it. This can occur if you are exposed to lead regularly over time, and can cause very serious, permanent damage to your health.



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
**Executive Office of Labor
and Workforce Development**
Department of Labor Standards

Lead on the Job

A Guide for Employees

For more information:

**Department of Labor Standards (DLS)
Occupational Lead Registry Program**

Wall Experiment Station
37 Shattuck Street
Lawrence, MA 01843

Website: www.mass.gov/dols



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INTRODUCTION

Lead poisoning has been a serious health concern for centuries. Even though much is known about lead and how it can affect your health, lead poisoning is still very common today.

Lead poisoning is a problem for house painters, bridge painters, construction workers renovating older homes, stained glass repair, and persons who operate and maintain shooting sports ranges. Lead can cause severe, permanent health problems if it is not properly handled.

HOW DOES LEAD AFFECT THE BODY?

The symptoms may hardly be noticeable at first, but over time lead poisoning can damage your brain, blood cells, nerves, kidneys and reproductive organs. This damage can cause serious disability: memory loss, extreme exhaustion, emotional problems, kidney failure, coma, and even death.

Lead can get into your body if you breathe in lead dust or fumes from work activities. It can also get into your body if you eat, drink, or smoke in work areas.

If your hands, clothes or shoes are contaminated, you may accidentally eat lead dust or bring the dangerous substance home to your family. Lead dust on your clothes or shoes may contaminate your car and home, potentially exposing children who are especially vulnerable to lead.



Prevent the Spread of Lead Dust

HOW TO AVOID LEAD POISONING

- Do not use compressed air to remove lead dust. Your employer must provide an industrial HEPA vacuum or use of a wet cleaning method.
- Do not eat, drink, or smoke in work areas.
- Use a respirator with HEPA filters when scraping, grinding, or sanding paint.
- Always wash your hands AND face before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Shower, wash your hair, and change into clean clothes as soon as possible.
- Store street clothes separately from your work clothes and avoid bringing work clothes home.
- Eat a well-balanced diet. Proper nutrition can help reduce lead levels, while fasting may increase lead levels.
- If you have concerns contact the lead registry.



For further assistance or information about the lead registry, please call or write:

Massachusetts Department of Labor Standards Occupational Lead Registry Program

Wall Experiment Station
37 Shattuck Street
Lawrence, MA 01843
617-626-6502

The Occupational Lead Registry collects information on all adults who are found to have an elevated blood lead level. The Registry gathers this information from laboratories throughout Massachusetts and uses it to inform the patient and his/her doctor about the dangers of lead, how to avoid future exposure and what treatment options are available.

Contents of this brochure were adapted from the Texas Department of Health and the California Department of Health Services.

