

Prevent Lead Poisoning at Work: Your health & family depends on it!

Lead is present at this work site!



How lead exposure can harm your health

Lead is released into the air as dust (particles) during:

- Abrasive blasting
- Grinding
- Torch cutting
- Sanding
- Welding
- Scraping

Lead dust in the air drifts and settles on anything nearby, including:

- Skin, clothing, and hair
- Tables, counters, equipment, tools, and floors
- Food, drink, and cigarettes

Sweeping and other actions scatter dust back into the air, creating more lead exposure.

You can inhale lead dust in the air or swallow (ingest) it when you eat, drink, or smoke before washing lead dust off your hands and face.

When you inhale or swallow lead dust, it gets absorbed into your blood. Some lead leaves your body in urine and the rest is stored in bones and organs where it can build up if exposure continues. Stored lead can stay in your body for years and cause damage until it is gradually released back into your blood and urine.

Lead can make you feel tired or irritable. It can give you stomach troubles, headaches, and muscle and/or joint pain.

Many people with high lead levels do not feel sick or poisoned.

High amounts of lead in your body can harm your blood, brain, nerves, and kidneys. Lead can also cause sterility and miscarriages. Permanent harm can start to occur before you notice any symptoms.

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What to expect if you work around lead

Your employer must do an exposure assessment to see if lead dust in the air or on surfaces presents a significant inhalation and/or ingestion hazard to workers.

Written documentation about lead exposures must be available to you.

You must receive training and information about:

- the health hazards of lead
- controlling lead exposures at work
- safety measures for your job

A copy of the Lead rule, Chapter 296-857 WAC, must be accessible to you in the workplace.

Safety improvements that lower airborne lead exposure and prevent the spread of lead dust may be required, like:

- improved ventilation
- better housekeeping and safer work practices

If you are required to use respirators and other personal protective equipment (PPE), your employer must provide the following (at no cost to you):

- medical clearance for respirator use
- a fit test for respirator use
- training so you can properly use, clean, maintain, and store your PPE

Depending on your lead exposures, you could be asked to:

- have your blood checked periodically (at no cost to you) for lead. Early detection can prevent lead from building up in your body without knowing.
- fill out a medical questionnaire or have a medical exam (at no cost to you).
- follow instructions to minimize lead exposure when the amount of lead in your body is high.
- temporarily transfer, without loss of pay or benefits, to a job with no lead exposure (i.e., medical removal).

Are you pregnant or trying to get pregnant?



During pregnancy, lead can pass from your blood to your unborn child. Even small amounts of lead can create risk for miscarriage, premature birth, and low birth weight. Lead can also harm your baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system.

Take extra safety precautions at work and home, when possible. Contact your doctor for medical advice.

How to keep lead out of your body

Keep lead dust out of your lungs.

- Use tools and equipment with dust collection systems to keep lead out of the air.
- When cleaning surfaces, use wet methods and HEPA vacuuming instead of dry sweeping or blowers.
- Know how to properly use, remove, clean, maintain, and store your respirator and other PPE.
- Minimize the time you spend in lead exposure areas.
- Don't shake out, brush off, or blow off dusty clothing.



Avoid swallowing lead contamination.

- Lead is difficult to remove. Scrub hands and nails and wash your face thoroughly before eating, drinking, and smoking.
- Keep lead dust out of lunch and break areas.



Keep lead at work and away from your car, home and family.

- Wash up at the end of the day to remove lead from hair, nails, and exposed skin.
- If possible, shower at work before going home.
- Use separate work clothes and shoes/boots while at work and don't take them home.
- Store your street clothes in a clean place.
- Launder lead-contaminated clothing at work.



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What you should know about lead exposure after work



Leaving work with lead on clothing, skin, hair, or shoes will spread it to your car and home. This "take home lead" can increase your overall lead exposure and harm children, pregnant women, and others who live with or around you. **Children and babies can be poisoned by very small amounts of lead, compared to adults.**

Some hobbies can also expose you, your family, and others to lead. Some examples: using lead-containing solders for car maintenance or stained glass crafts, and handling or shooting lead-containing bullets.

Do-it-yourself lead test kits are available online or at hardware stores to help you quickly tell if lead is present.

Many of the safety precautions used at work will help keep yourself and others safe from lead after work. For example, wash up immediately after lead exposure, never wear lead-contaminated clothing or shoes in your house or car, and wash and dry lead-contaminated clothing separately from other laundry.

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