

# Keeping You and Your Family Safe from Lead

No amount of lead is safe, even for adults.

## What is lead and how can it make me sick?

- Lead is a harmful metal that can poison people.
- You can get sick if you swallow, touch, or breathe lead dust or fumes.
- Lead can build up in the body over time and can harm your health before causing any symptoms.
- Lead can cause permanent harm at any age, including brain and nerve damage, kidney damage, reproductive problems, and other health issues.

## What can cause lead poisoning?

- Shooting bullets that contain lead.
- Melting metal that has lead in it (casting bullets or fishing lures).
- Working with stained glass or pottery.
- Renovating or remodeling older homes.
- Painting or stripping cars, boats, or bicycles.
- Eating from leaded cookware.
- Drinking liquids that have lead in them.
- Living in or having lived in a place with high lead levels in the air or soil.

## What jobs may have lead risk?

If you work at these jobs or live with someone who does, you may be at risk.

- Artists
- Auto repairers
- Construction workers
- Firing range instructors and gunsmiths
- Steel welders
- Plumbers and pipe fitters
- Police officers
- Manufacturers and recyclers of metal, electronics, and batteries
- Shipbuilders
- Solid waste incinerator operators
- Painters

## Could you be taking lead home?

The best way to keep lead dust out of your home is to keep it from leaving work.



Shower and wash your hands before leaving work if you can. Change clothes and shoes before leaving work.



Wash your work clothes separately from your family's clothes. Run the empty washing machine again to rinse out any lead.



Don't bring work items home (like boots, lunchbox, or tools). If you do, store them in heavy plastic away from children.



## Talk to your doctor:

- If you work with lead at work or at home.
- About a blood lead test. Adults who are lead poisoned may have serious health problems without knowing it.
- About testing children and pregnant women in your house. Your doctor, health clinic, or local health department can help.

## Resources:

- Contact Wisconsin Occupational Health at 608-266-1120 or visit [dhs.wi.gov/adult-lead/workers.htm](https://dhs.wi.gov/adult-lead/workers.htm).
- Learn what personal protective equipment (PPE) you need: <https://www.nj.gov/health/eoh/rtkweb/documents/fs/1096.pdf>.
- You can also ask questions about lead and work by contacting CDC-INFO at 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) or at <https://www.cdc.gov/dcs/ContactUs/Form>.

To find out how lead can affect you during pregnancy and breastfeeding, see next page.

WISCONSIN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Bureau of Environmental and Occupational Health

Wisconsin Department of Health Services | Division of Public Health

[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/occupational-health) | MAY 2019 | P-02409 (05/2019)



# Thinking About Pregnancy or Currently Pregnant?

Talk to your doctor.



## Lead can make you and your baby sick and cause lifelong health problems.

Lead in your body can:

- Put you at risk of miscarriage or stillbirth.
- Cause high blood pressure in pregnancy.
- Cause your baby to be born too early or too small.
- Hurt your baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system.
- Cause your child to have learning or behavior problems.

## Talk to your doctor:

- **If you work in a job where you are exposed to lead.** Tell them you may have been exposed to lead. Your doctor may order a blood lead level test to find out if you have a lead level that needs to be followed throughout pregnancy.
- **If you take any medication or vitamins.** Lead is found in some herbal remedies and supplements.
- **If you are eating any non-food items,** such as soil or clay.

## What can pregnant women do to stay safe from lead?

- **Get every blood test and checkup that your doctor recommends.** Lead levels can go up in pregnancy, even if you are not currently working with lead. Your doctor may decide your levels have to be checked every month or more.
- **Take yourself away from the lead source.** Remember that this is the most important way to lower lead levels in your body. Your doctor may help you learn more about lowering your lead levels.
- **Make sure your baby gets every blood lead test and checkup that your doctor recommends.**
- **Keep out of work areas during repair or remodeling of a house built before 1978.**

## Resources:

- **Check with your doctor** who has the most information on you and your pregnancy.
- Contact **Wisconsin Occupational Health** at 608-266-1120 or visit [dhs.wi.gov/adult-lead/workers.htm](https://dhs.wi.gov/adult-lead/workers.htm).
- Learn more about **lead and pregnancy for workers**; visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/repro/heavymetals.html>.
- Learn more about **lead and breastfeeding**; visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/environmental-exposures/lead.html>.



## Is it safe to breastfeed if I have come in contact with lead?

- **Check with your doctor.** Tell them you want to breastfeed your baby but may have been exposed to lead.
- **Most women who have been exposed to lead can breastfeed.** Unless you have very high blood lead levels (more than 40  $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ ), breastfeeding is usually recommended. **Check with your doctor to be sure.**