

# Preventing Lead Poisoning

## What is Lead?

Lead is a harmful metal that can affect your health. Once it enters the environment, it won't go away unless it's removed. Lead in paint dust and soil are the most common sources of exposure, especially in older homes. Young children ages 0-6 and pregnant women are most at risk.

People absorb lead by inhaling lead dust or fumes, or swallowing dust while eating, drinking, or smoking. Adults can be exposed to lead through many sources, including the workplace, at home, through hobbies, and household items.

## Sources of Lead Exposure

- **Paint:** Homes built before 1978 may have lead-based paint should be repaired or replaced in a lead-safe way.
- **Pipes:** When water flows through old, corroded plumbing pipes made of lead, the lead can dissolve in the water exposing from the tap.
- **Household items:** Some imported items like spices, toys, pottery, and cosmetics, especially if they were sold outside of the U.S.
- **Work and Hobbies:** Jobs and hobbies that involve working with lead or being exposed to dust or fumes from lead, such as, construction, painting, auto repair, shooting ranges (lead bullets), fishing (lead weights).

Symptoms of lead poisoning are often unseen and do not show up until there is lead buildup in the body. People who look healthy may have high lead levels without showing any signs. It is also possible for lead poisoning to be confused with other illnesses.

Awareness of signs, symptoms, and screening are critical to address serious health effects. Let your health care provider know if you think you or someone in your home has been exposed to lead.

## Signs & Symptoms of Lead Poisoning in Adults

- **Metallic taste**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Joint and muscle pain**
- **Trouble with memory, attention, and learning**
- **Headaches**
- **Stomach pain**
- **Mood and behavior changes**
- **Fertility problems in men and women**
- **Miscarriage, stillbirth, or premature birth in pregnant individuals**

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## Keep Your Home Dust-Free

- Remove shoes before entering the home.
- Wet mop floors instead of dry sweeping to stop the spread of dust. Wet wipe windowsills and other surfaces often.
- Use a vacuum that has HEPA filter. If you do not have a HEPA vacuum, use an allergen filter bag.



## Follow Safe Work Practices

- Change clothes before entering your home, wash hands often, and rinse fruits and vegetables.



## Eat Healthy Foods to Block Lead Absorption

For example:

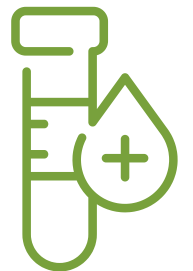
- **Iron-rich foods:** beans, fortified cereals, lean meat, fish, tofu.
- **Calcium-rich foods:** milk, yogurt, cheese, dark-green vegetables, canned salmon.
- **Vitamin C:** oranges, tomatoes, limes, bell peppers, broccoli, berries.



## Get A Blood Lead Test

**The only way to know if you have lead in your body is to have a blood lead test. Ask your health care provider or clinic to test you and/or your children.**

- If you don't have a health care provider, you can sign up for Medi Cal:
  - In-person: At your local Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) office.
  - By phone: Call (866) 613-3777
  - Online: <https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/health.html>
- No cost and low-cost tests may be available at some community clinics. Call 1-800-4-LEAD (1-800-524-5323).



## Resources

To learn more about lead exposure and how to prevent it

- Visit [www.cdph.ca.gov/program/clppb](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/program/clppb)
- Call: 1-(800) LA-4-LEAD (1-800- 524-5323)

