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- Cleaning up and handling lead waste

Exposure to high levels of lead can have harmful health effects on you— and on your family, too. These health effects could happen to you if you are exposed to high levels of lead.

- Impotence
- Reduced sex drive
- Stomach pain
- Loss of appetite
- Vomiting, diarrhea
- Kidney damage
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Tiredness
- Moodiness
- Headaches
- Concentration and memory problems
- Anxiety
- Brain damage

These health effects and more could happen to you if you are exposed to high levels of lead. Your family, especially children, may be exposed to lead dust brought home by you on your clothes and shoes, your thermos or lunch container, your tools, your car, or other things you bring back from work.

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Additional resources

Your doctor or other health care provider can tell you or others in your household how to prevent or minimize your exposure to lead. Ask your doctor for a blood-lead level test.

Your safety officer or industrial hygienist at work can tell you how to prevent or minimize your exposure to lead using engineering controls and protective equipment. See additional information on inside of this brochure.

Department of Labor and Industries

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Lead gets into your body in two ways:

- Breathing in lead dust, mist, or fumes
- Swallowing lead dust on your hands from eating, drinking, or smoking

Lead poisoning is usually a slow process, often taking place over months or years. Lead can build up in your body and stay there for a long time.

With a very high exposure, lead poisoning can create a serious emergency even within one workshift.
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Your family, especially children, may be exposed to lead dust brought home by you on your clothes and shoes, your thermos or lunch container, your tools, your car, or other things you bring back from work.

You should wash your hands immediately and change clothes before entering your home. The best way you can protect your family from lead poisoning is to prevent or minimize your exposure to lead from the start.

Additional Resources

- Your doctor or other health care provider
- Your safety officer or industrial hygienist at work
- Your local health department

Don’t let lead-containing materials find their way into your home. When the dust can harm your family, especially children, you are not overexposed to lead in your work environment. Follow the recommendations in this guide.

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Lead gets into your body and can stay there for a long time. Once in your system, lead stays there for years or even decades. It can interfere with the production of healthy sperm in men and can affect a woman’s ability to get pregnant.

Children are affected by much smaller amounts of lead. Very small amounts of lead can cause serious problems, such as mental retardation, behavior problems, or slowed growth.

The best way you can protect yourself and your family is to prevent or minimize your exposure to lead:

- Work with your employer to ensure that you are not overexposed to lead in your workplace.
- Follow the recommended safe work practices on the inside of this brochure.
- Don’t take lead-contaminated materials home, where the dust can harm your family!

The Department of Labor and Industries offers free assistance and information to both employers and employees. Call 1-800-423-7233 (4BE-SAFE) for more information. Visit the L&I web site at www.LNI.wa.gov/Safety.

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Your doctor or other health care provider can test you or others in your household for lead poisoning. Ask your doctor for a blood-lead level test.

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Additional resources

Your doctor or other health care provider can give you advice on whether you are at risk for lead poisoning.

Your safety officer or industrial hygienist at work can also advise you on how to prevent lead exposure.

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How much lead in the air is hazardous?
The construction-industry lead standard requires your employer to make sure that lead in the air is not at hazardous levels (greater than 50 micrograms per cubic meter of air [mcg/m³] averaged over an eight-hour period).

No amount of lead is safe!
A blood-lead level (BLL) test measures how much lead is in your blood. It is the best indicator of recent exposure. If you are concerned about much lead is in your blood. It is the best indicator of recent exposure. If you are concerned about the lead in your blood, see your doctor and ask to have a BLL test.

Blood-Lead Levels and Your Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood-Lead Levels (mcg/dL)</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>70</th>
<th>60</th>
<th>50</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>30</th>
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<td>Severe health damage is likely. It may occur quickly and may be permanent.</td>
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<td>Damage may be occurring even if you have no symptoms.</td>
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<td>Lead is building up in the body.</td>
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<td>Typical level for U.S. adults</td>
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<td>* mcg/dL: micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood</td>
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Just how much is 50 mcg/m³?
Imagine a typical high school football field. Imagine placing a box over the field that went from sideline to sideline and from end zone to end zone with a lid at the top of the goal posts. 50 mcg/m³ would be the same amount as half a penny dispersed in the air contained in the box.

Your Employer’s Responsibilities
Your employer is responsible for providing:
- A safe and healthy workplace.
- Protection from harmful exposure to lead, including personal protective equipment (PPE) at no cost to you.
- A copy of air monitoring results, if you request it.
- A copy of the Lead rule (WAC 296-62-07521), if you request it.
- Training on how you can avoid lead exposure.
- Medical monitoring, which may include blood testing, medical exams, and consultation, if you are exposed to lead.
- Another job without loss of pay or benefits (“medical removal”), if you cannot work with lead for medical reasons.

Your Rights as a Worker
You have the right to:
- File a confidential complaint with L&I if you believe there may be a serious hazard.
- File a complaint with L&I if your employer is retaliating against you for asking about your rights or for having filed an L&I complaint. It is unlawful to retaliate against workers who ask about safety and health or who file a complaint.
- Call 1-800-423-7233 (4BE-SAFE) or the nearest L&I office for assistance.

Follow safe work practices and procedures
- Follow all safety rules. Use your respirator properly and always wear your personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Talk to your supervisor if you have any concerns about lead exposure at work. Ask about lead-free “clean” areas where you can wash, take breaks, store your street clothes, shower, and change.
- Avoid heating lead, for example, by stripping paint before torch-cutting.
- Don’t stir up dust by sweeping or blowing. Wet clean or vacuum with a HEPA filter-equipped vacuum cleaner.
- Use water when grinding, sanding, or cutting objects that contain lead. When sandblasting, you must wear a respirator or sandblasting hood with fresh air supplied by a hose.
- Wash your hands and face very thoroughly with soap and water before you eat, drink, or smoke.
- Eat, drink, and smoke only in areas free of lead dust and fumes.
- Don’t remove dust by blowing down or shaking out your clothing.
- Clean your hard hat, respirator, gloves, shoes/boots, any other PPE you use, and your tools, and store in a safe, clean place. If you must keep them with you, store them in a closable container.

Get the lead out — before you go home
- Use separate work clothes and shoes/boots while at work — don’t wear them home. Keep your street clothes in a locker or clean place.
- If possible, shower and wash your hair at work before going home. At the very least, thoroughly wash your hands, arms, and face with soap and water. Be sure to use a clean towel.