# Lead and Your Health

## No Amount of Lead is Safe, Even for Adults.

## What is lead?

- Lead is a poisonous metal that can be found in common items like paint and fishing sinkers.
- Lead poisoning is caused by swallowing or breathing lead dust and fumes.
- Lead fumes and dust don't have a smell.
- Lead builds up in the body over time. Swallowing or breathing small amounts repeatedly can be harmful. A one-time large amount can also be harmful.

## What health problems does lead cause?

- Lead can cause permanent harm, including brain and nerve damage, kidney failure, reproductive problems, and other health issues.
- Lead can harm your health before it causes any symptoms.

## How do workers get lead poisoning?

- Workers can get lead poisoning when working near lead dust, lead-based products, and lead fumes. Lead dust comes from sanding or sandblasting areas coated with lead paint.
- Workers can make lead fumes by torching areas coated with lead paint, working with lead solder, or melting lead in a furnace or pot.

## How can my family be poisoned if I work near lead?

- Lead dust can settle on work clothes and you can bring it into your home.
- Lead is especially dangerous for children and pregnant women.
- Change clothes and shoes before you leave work and shower if possible.

## What else can cause lead poisoning?

- Shooting bullets containing lead
- Remodeling or renovation
- Melting metal that has lead; for example, when casting bullets or fishing lures
- Working with stained glass or pottery
- Eating from leaded cookware
- Drinking water with lead, usually due to lead pipes.
- Drinking other liquids that have lead in them.

## How can I find out if I have lead poisoning?

- A simple blood lead level (BLL) test can show if you have lead poisoning or not.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says no one should have a blood lead level more than 3.5 µg/dL (test levels are measured in µg/dL).

## What is the best treatment?

- Your doctor can tell you what to do to lower the amount of lead in your body.
- The most important way to lower lead levels in your body is to remove yourself from the lead source.

## More Information

1. Learn more about lead in the workplace: **go.usa.gov/xKtn4**

2. Learn more about what personal protective equipment you need for your job: **go.usa.gov/x9tDU**

3. Call 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636) to learn more about lead and your work.

4. Wisconsin Occupational Health can be reached at 608-266-1120.