Genesee County Health Department

Frequently Asked Questions About Lead & Your Body

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

Pregnant Woman

If you are exposed to lead when pregnant, the lead can be passed on to your fetus, possibly causing:

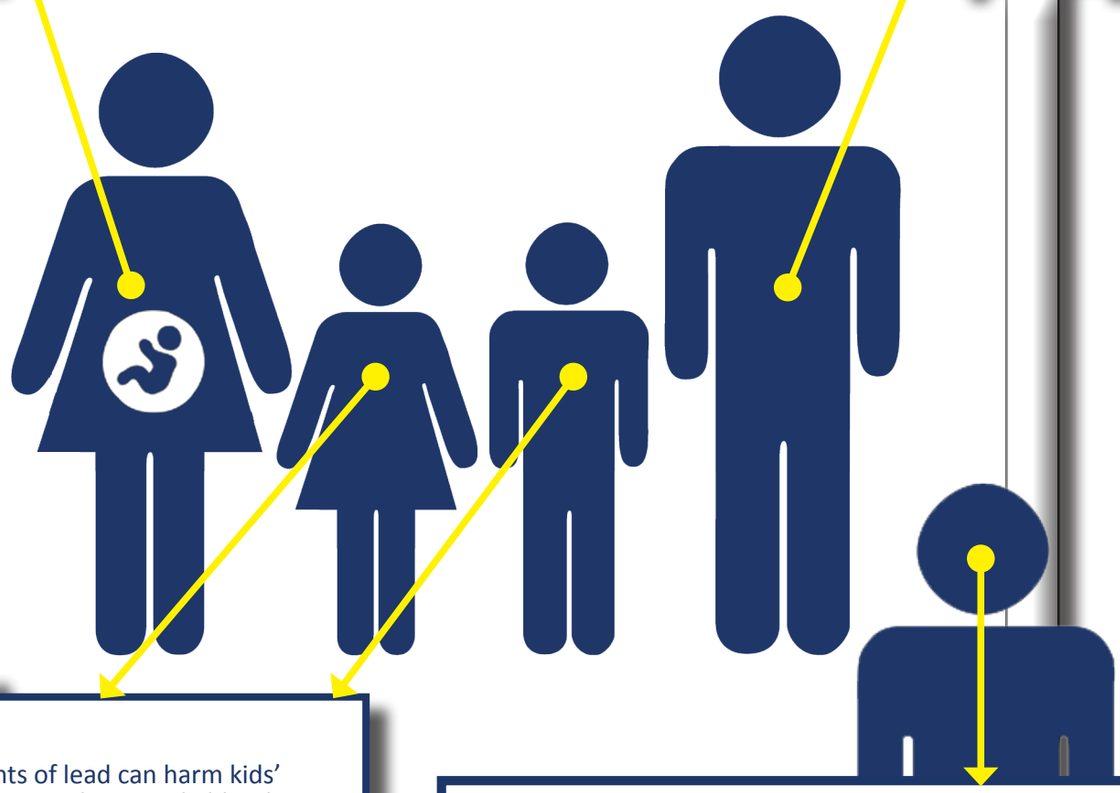
- premature birth
- a smaller baby
- learning difficulties
- slower growth in young kids

Healthy Adult

You are at lower risk of health problems from small amounts of lead.

Most health problems that come from lead in adults are because they are exposed to a lot of it at their job - whether they are in painting or construction or work at a factory where lead is used in a product.

If you work with lead, you should have regular blood tests to make sure you're not getting too much into your body.



Kids

Even small amounts of lead can harm kids' health. Your doctor can do a simple blood test to find out if your child has been exposed to lead. Some possible signs of lead poisoning include:

- a bad stomachache
- muscle weakness
- paleness (caused by anemia)

Over time lead can affect a kid's

- brain development
- growth rate

How Does Lead Get Into Your Body?

Eating and breathing lead dust is the most common way lead gets into your body.

- When kids accidentally eat lead, up to 50% can be absorbed into their bodies, compared to 3 to 10% for adults. This is why protecting kids from even small amounts of lead is important.

Lead does not absorb into your skin quickly or at high levels.

- The CDC reviewed a study where a cream with high levels of lead was put on the skin of adults. The cream was left on their skin for 12 hours. The amount of lead that soaked into their skin was very, very small (less than 0.3 percent).
- Taking a shower or bath in water containing lead at levels found in most tap water in Michigan is unlikely to be a problem for anyone, including kids.

If you think you or your children have been exposed to lead, please talk to your doctor or health department about getting a simple blood test to measure how much lead might be in your body.

For more information on protecting yourself and your family from lead, please visit: www.michigan.gov/lead, or you can call the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services at 1-800-648-6942. We will help direct you to the best department that can answer your questions about lead in your home.

You can also call the Flint Water Department at 810-787-6537 to request a free or low-cost water test.
If you use City of Flint water, you can call 211 to find out where you can pick up a free NSF-approved water filter.

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