

# Adult Exposure to Lead

Lead can be harmful to a person's health, and it is best to avoid any exposure to lead. Lead is a metal that can be found in air, soil, water, and inside our homes. While lead will continue to exist in the environment, it is important to know where lead comes from so you can reduce or prevent your exposure.



## How can an adult be exposed to lead?

Jobs and hobbies are the most common way adults can be exposed to hazardous levels of lead. Some higher risk activities include:

- removal of lead paint used in homes built before 1978.
- brass and bronze manufacturing.
- recycling of lead batteries.
- working at a gun range (instructor or maintenance).
- hunting (shot and reloading lead ammunition).
- fishing (fishing sinkers and jigs).
- stained glass (came and solder).
- making pottery (dyes and glazes).

Learn more about sources of lead at [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

## What health problems can lead cause in an adult?

Almost everyone has been exposed to lead at some time in their life. However, it is not common for an adult to experience health problems from lead exposures. An adult body can remove lead more efficiently than a child's body. However, adults who have been exposed to lead over time may experience some health problems, such as:

- Increased blood pressure
- Decreased kidney function
- Decreased cognitive function
- Slower reaction times
- Altered mood and behavior



Adults who are exposed to higher amounts of lead, such as in the workplace over a period of time, could experience other health problems. These might include:

- Anemia
- Severe stomach ache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and/or constipation
- Muscle weakness or soreness
- Increased risk of heart disease
- Poor sperm and semen quality
- Delayed conception

Children and fetuses are most at risk from lead exposure because their bodies and nervous systems are still developing.

To learn more about the effects of lead exposure for fetuses and infants, read:

[Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women Fact Sheet](#)



## Should adults have their blood tested for lead?

One way to know if you have a recent or on-going exposure to lead is to get a blood lead test. A blood lead test **can** tell if a person has a recent or ongoing exposures to lead. A blood lead test **cannot** tell if a person was exposed to lead in the past. You can contact your healthcare provider to talk about lead exposure or request a simple blood test.

For more information call the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) at 800-648-6942 or visit [Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe).

## For More Information

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services  
Drinking Water Hotline  
844-934-1315

List of Michigan Local Health Departments  
[Malph.org/Resources/Directory](https://Malph.org/Resources/Directory)

Mi Lead Safe Website  
[Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe)

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program  
517-335-8885  
[Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe)

Lead Safe Home Program  
866-691-5323  
[Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe](https://Michigan.gov/MiLeadSafe)

