

What you can do

1 Find out if you are being exposed to lead at work. Ask your employer, safety coordinator, or contact the WorkCover Authority for more information. Find Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for any materials or chemicals you are using and think may contain lead.



2 Use alternatives to lead. If there is another product (e.g. a solder) which does not have lead in it or has less lead – use it!



3 Create a safe workplace. Many simple changes to plant, machinery, production processes, equipment and work practices can reduce the dangers of lead. To find out more, ask your employer, safety coordinator, or contact the WorkCover Authority.



4 Wash your hands and face before meals and before smoking. This will help ensure you do not accidentally eat lead dust. Also don't smoke (or carry cigarettes) where lead dust is present.

5 Clean up and change out of work clothes when finished for the day. This stops you taking lead dust home on your body, clothes and car and will protect your family.

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6 Use the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE or safety equipment) at work and look after it. Using respirators and face masks, overalls, gloves and other PPE will help protect you from lead and other dangerous materials. It is your employer's responsibility to provide the right equipment, maintain it and show you how to use it properly.



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NEED MORE INFORMATION?

For information on lead in the workplace and how to protect yourself, phone the WorkCover Authority on **131 050**.

For other sources of information on lead ask:

- a WorkCover Authorised Medical Practitioner (ask WorkCover for nearest AMP)
- your occupational health and safety coordinator or manager
- your employer or union representative
- a Workers Health Centre

This publication has been developed by the Lead Reference Centre (www.epa.nsw.gov.au/leadsafe) EPA 99/23 Information correct at March 1999.



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WORKING SAFELY WITH LEAD

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in the building and demolition industry



LEAD IS A DANGER TO WORKERS

If lead enters our bodies it can cause many health problems, some serious. Many building and demolition workers can unknowingly expose themselves because they are unaware of lead hazards on the job. So, it is important that workers know about the dangers of lead and how they can protect themselves.

Examples of Lead Risk Jobs

Abrasive blasters and coaters	Gasfitters
Architects	Glaziers
Building inspectors	Plumbers
Cable layers	Painters and decorators
Carpenters	Metalworkers
Carpet layers	Plasterers
Cabinet makers	Roofing contractors
Demolition workers	Shopfitters
Electricians	Tilers

Health effects of lead

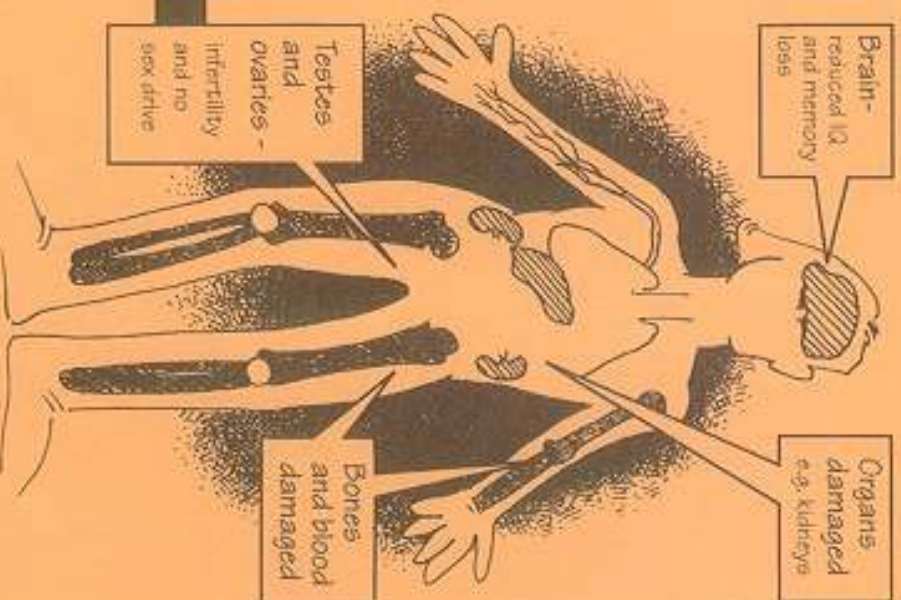
Lead is a poison. It can affect almost every part of the body.

Low levels of exposure can cause joint and muscle pain, high blood pressure and memory loss.

High lead levels can damage major organs (especially the kidneys and liver) and cause nerve and blood problems.

Very high levels of lead can cause fits, coma and, in extreme cases, death.

Your body can get rid of only small amounts of lead each day. If more lead is entering your body than can be removed, it will build up over time causing health problems.



Sources of lead

Lead paint including:

- domestic paint used in many houses built before 1970
- protective coatings used on industrial buildings, plant and equipment
- marine, automotive and vehicle paints
- anti-corrosive paints
- road marking and sign-writing paint.

Building products can contain lead including flashing, sheet lead, PVC products, lead solder and plumbing fittings.

Petrol and lubricants including leaded petrol, some types of oil and grease, and waste oil can contain lead.

Hazardous **lead dust** can build up in workplaces which are not cleaned properly. Many work practices commonly used in industry, such as burning, sanding and grinding, can disturb or create hazardous lead fumes and dust which workers can take into their bodies.

How lead gets into your body

Breathing in dust and fumes is the main way lead enters a worker's body. Fine particles of lead can penetrate deep into the lungs and pass into the blood.

Eating contaminated food and drink can occur if workers don't wash their hands before meals and eat in workplaces where lead dust is present. Smokers can accidentally take in lead dust if it's on their hands or cigarettes.

Absorption through the skin

can happen where leaded petrol or lubricants are handled without gloves or barrier cream. Recent research suggests that fine particles of lead may be able to enter the body through sweat pores in the skin.

