Exposure to Lead

Lead negatively impacts our health in many ways — and we have known this for as long as we have used lead.

Lead exposure can occur through inhalation, ingestion and to a lesser extent, dermal contact. The most common way people are exposed is from ingestion of old lead paint. As the paint ages, it peels and breaks down into dust, then enters the body through hand to mouth contact or contamination of food or water.

There are also risks of workplace exposure in fields that may come into contact with lead, including, but not limited to the construction, manufacturing and solid waste/recycling sectors.

Exposure to high levels of lead can cause severe damage to the brain, blood and kidneys. Children under six are most at risk from lead poisoning. Even low levels of lead exposure have been found to permanently reduce cognitive ability and cause hyperactivity in children.

ADULTS

Brain
Memory loss, lack of concentration, headaches, irritability, depression.

Body
Fatigue, joint and muscle pain

Cardiovascular
High blood pressure

Digestive System
Constipation, nausea and poor appetite

Nervous System
Damage including numbness and pain in the extremities

Kidneys
Abnormal function and damage

Reproductive System
Men: Decreased sex drive and sperm count, and sperm anomalies. Women: Spontaneous miscarriage

CHILDREN

Brain
Behavior problems, lower IQ, hearing loss, learning disabilities

Body
decreased bone and muscle growth

Blood
Anemia

Kidneys
Abnormal function and damage

Nervous System
Damage