

Working With Lead

Lead has been used for many years in many different guises. Its presence is not always obvious. It was, for example, used in many old paints.

How can we be exposed to harm from lead?

Contact with lead is most likely through welding, burning or abrasion of lead coated or painted surfaces. Although we only randomly carry out work with this material, the effects from these activities are likely to produce short-term effects.

How does it get into the body?

Inhaled in the form of dust or fumes from sanding or burning.
Swallowed when eating, drinking or smoking without washing hands.
Some types of lead can also be absorbed through your skin (lead in petrol).

What are the Health Effects?

Short-Term:	Headaches	Tiredness	Irritability
	Constipation	Nausea	Stomach Pains
	Anaemia	Weight Loss	
Long-Term:	Kidney Damage	Nerve And Brain Damage	

Note: women of child-bearing age and persons under 18 are at greater risk from lead, so the level of lead they can be exposed to is lower than that for other employees.

Control Measures

Work properly planned: risks assessed, controls include: enclosure of working area, setting up a decontamination zone, using PPE (respirators with the correct filters (changed each shift), eye protection, overalls with hoods, gloves).

No eating, drinking or smoking is allowed until after decontamination

After the work: decontamination: removing the PPE and leaving it in the decontamination area, washing hands and scrubbing nails before eating, drinking or smoking and using the onsite 'lead' shower at the end of the shift before leaving site.

It is important not to take any contaminated clothing home as the lead can affect your family.

Health Monitoring

If your potential exposure to lead is significant, health monitoring is carried out by an occupational health medical practitioner and involves taking blood samples. This is carried out before work commences and throughout the duration of the works. Depending on the results, there is an action level at which an employer has to reduce the level of your exposure and a suspension level is that at which you are not allowed to work where you may be exposed to lead.

Questions:

- 1 what work activities allow lead to be absorbed into the body?
- 2 how does lead get into the body?
- 3 what must be done before eating, drinking or smoking?

Remember:

**Good hygiene practices prevent lead poisoning to you,
Your colleagues and your family**

Further Information: CIP Manual, Section 33