LEAPP Alliance

Toxic Lead:

Still Here

Still Harming



Does your home or workplace contain toxic amounts of lead?

Lead Exposure and Poisoning Prevention Alliance

leappalliance.org.uk

Version i5, 17th June2025

Where can lead be found?

- Lead is widespread through use in old paint, petrol and plumbing, resulting in contamination of dust, soil and water
- Lead may also be found in other items such as some toys, drinking glasses, traditional medicines, spices, brass, road markings, cosmetics, ceramics, jewellery and light-aircraft fuel
- Around 52% of homes were built before lead paint was labelled (1963). 80% of homes were built before most lead paint was banned (1992)
- 6-9 million homes probably still have some lead pipes and some others have lead-soldered copper pipes

If any of the above apply to you, then you could be at risk of lead exposure

- It is estimated that around 351,000 UK children have elevated blood lead concentrations. Most are never tested
- Lead exposure is estimated to cost the country up to £125 billion per year

What harm does lead do?

Studies have found links between lead and harm throughout life, and even before birth, contributing to:

Reproductive – miscarriage, pre-term birth, low birth weight, delayed puberty

Neurological - IQ loss, ADHD, lower academic achievement, decreased hearing, language difficulties, essential tremor

Psychological - problem behaviour, depression, anxiety, panic

Cardiovascular – heart attack, stroke, increased blood pressure

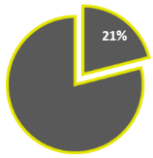
Renal – reduced kidney function

In many cases there are no immediate symptoms, but acute lead poisoning in children can include irritability, fatigue, loss of appetite, weight loss, abdominal pain, vomiting, and constipation

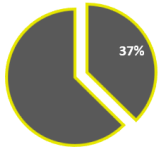
How much disease can be attributed to lead?

Examples

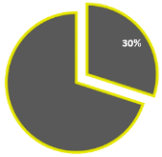
ADHD (21%)



Coronary heart disease deaths (37%)



Idiopathic developmental intellectual disability (30%)



How much lead does it take



Very little. The USA child reference intake level in food is just 2.2 µg lead per day (*2.2 millionths of a gram).* That is about the weight of 1/18th of an eyelash.

Images Courtesy of Public Health – Seattle & King County

What you can do

At home:

- Take off outdoor shoes
- Wash hands before eating
- Clean your home regularly with a wet mop or HEPA-filter vacuum
- Don't dry sand or scrape lead paint
- Check the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- If renovating, see the DEFRA guide

At work:

- Follow the Control of Lead at Work Act (CLAW)
- If painting, follow "PaintSafe"
- Don't take leaded dust on your clothes home, or into your car
- Take a lead-safe training course

Test for lead (see our website) in:

- Paint
- Soil
- Dust
- Water
- Blood



Artwork by Amy Camber

Real quotes from parents

"I feel so upset. So sad. So guilty. And first and fore-most so scared. My 18-month-old son deserves so much more than to be lead poisoned. And I'm heartbroken."

"My little man had a lead level high as 20 (µg/dL) when we found out. As a mum I'm completely devastated that I didn't do more research on my house before moving in! My sweet baby. The guilt I feel is terrible."

"This slum landlord stole my son's life."



The LEAPP Alliance is a group of academics, parents, service providers and advocates who aim to promote lead poisoning prevention in the UK

See leappalliance.org.uk for more details, evidence and our manifesto; or email info@leappalliance.org.uk.

References

P1 **None**

P2 **Bullet 1**

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Bullet 5 and 6

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General

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Training

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- Commercial courses – search online for *lead awareness training uk*

Sources of testing, examples I have used:

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  - 3MLeadCheck from SKC
- Soil
  - Heritage Testing
- Dust
  - Heritage Testing
  - Enviro-prob, New Jersey
- Water
  - Drinking Water Test Kit for Lead (Twin Pack) from WaterSafe
- Blood
  - NHS
  - Medichecks

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Facebook “Lead poisoning support group” and “Lead Poisoning Awareness and Support”

Image credits and licences

P1 Maine, USA Lead Poisoning Prevention programme. Copyright, permission requested. https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/environmental-health/eohp/lead/index.shtml

P4,5,6 Courtesy of Public Health – Seattle & King County, artwork by Amy Camber. https://publichealthinsider.com/2019/08/05/why-testing-for-lead-helps-kids-and-how-you-can-get-free-testing/

Version History

Version 4

Additional parent comment. Applied some comments from UKHSA. Changed “Lead can also” to “Lead may also” and add “some”. Add units on parent comment. Add “If any of the above apply to you, then you could be at risk of lead exposure.” Change “Should we still worry about lead” to “Where can lead be found?”. Change “associations” to “links”

Version 5

Updated estimates of prevalence and cost. Update percentage of homes built and Idiopathic developmental intellectual disability.

Review comments

Professor David Ormandy	University of Warwick
Dr Andrew Turner	University of Plymouth
Professor Abby Kinchy	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Dr Caroline Taylor	University of Bristol
Dr Lindsay Bramwell	Northumbria University
Professor Howard Mielke	Tulane University School of Medicine
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