

LEAD | WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1 Possible sources of exposure

-  Food
 -  Cereals
 -  Grain-based foods
 -  Vegetables grown in contaminated sites
 -  Breast milk
-  Drinking water (leaded water pipes in old houses)
-  Contaminated household dust and soil (especially in the case of toddlers)
-  Maternal blood (Lead stored in bone may be remobilized into the blood during pregnancy)
-  Household dust (dust containing old paint residues)
-  Smoking
-  Particles originating from waste burning
-  Occupational exposure (e-waste recycling, battery production, construction / welding, soldering/, auto mechanic, lead mining and smelting, jewellery production)

2 How can lead enter your body?

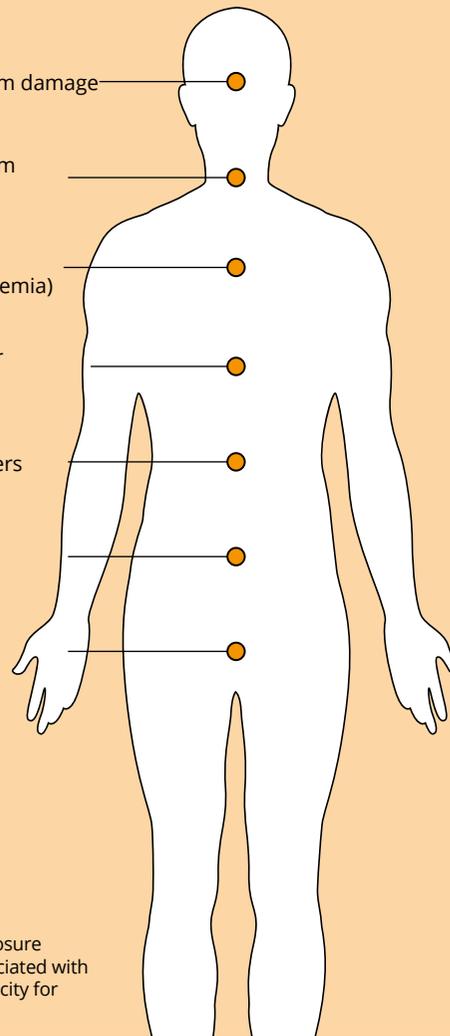
Via ingestion 

Via placental transfer 

Via inhalation 

3 How might lead affect your health?

-  Nervous system damage
-  Immune system disorders
-  Blood system disorders (anaemia)
-  Cardiovascular diseases
-  Kidney disorders
-  Cancer
-  Reproductive problems



Note: Low-level lead exposure during pregnancy is associated with developmental neurotoxicity for the foetus.

4 How can you reduce your exposure to lead?

-   Consume well-balanced, healthy meals, as the major source of exposure is through consumption of food
-   Clean and dust indoor spaces regularly
-   Choose high-quality products, particularly toys and materials that may come in contact with food
-   If you live in an old house, replace the leaded water pipes in your house, until then flushing tap water for at least one minute is recommended.
-   Also, in the case of old houses, it's important that lead containing paints and ceramics should be removed

The European Union has taken actions to protect the citizens from lead exposure by putting in place regulations which limit the levels of lead in water, air and soil, restrict the lead content of products used in our daily lives and regulate occupational exposure. The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), has also set maximum limits for lead levels in foodstuffs.

 For further information on lead, please visit the **'HBM4EU Factsheet'** section.

Where can they possibly be found?

Lead can be found in the environment mainly in its inorganic form. Anthropogenic activities are the main sources of lead in the environment. Exposure occurs mainly through food and drinking water in case lead pipes are used, as well as tobacco smoke, contaminated household dust (e.g. old paints residues), particles originating from burning of waste also contain lead.