



Common Questions about Lead

What is lead?

Lead is a bluish-gray metal that is used in a wide range of products including batteries, ammunition, metal products (solder and pipes), and devices to shield X-rays. Due to health concerns, use of lead in products has been dramatically reduced in recent years.

How would the lead in my yard get into my body?

Lead can enter the body by inhaling air, drinking water, or swallowing food or dirt that contains lead. Nearly all of the lead that enters the body moves to the blood and is transported to other parts of the body. Small amounts of lead can also enter the body through the skin.

Regardless of how lead enters the body, it is usually stored in bone. Over time, the amount of lead in bones and teeth increases.

Why is lead dangerous?

Lead is harmful to people because it can cause high blood pressure, digestive problems, nerve disorders, memory and concentration problems, and muscle and joint pain. Exposure to lead is particularly dangerous for pregnant women as lead can cause premature birth, low birth weight or miscarriage.

Children are also at risk because they are more likely to swallow dirt that contains lead, and they are more sensitive to the effects of lead. Lead exposure in children has been shown to decrease IQ scores, slow growth and cause hearing problems.

Although a connection between lead and cancer has not been shown in humans, laboratory animals exposed to lead have developed tumors, so lead is considered to be a possible cancer-causing substance.

How to keep your family safe.

- Prevent your child from putting dirt in his or her mouth.
- If possible, cover exposed dirt with grass, flowers, mulch or concrete.
- Spray water on dusty areas in your yard.
- Do not let children play in dirt.
- Avoid eating outside.
- Wash hands often.
- Wash toys that have been outside.
- If you have a garden, avoid growing leafy or root vegetables such as lettuce or carrots.
- Do not dig in the garden on windy days.
- Wear gloves when gardening.
- Use a door mat and wipe your feet when entering the house.
- Practice good housekeeping.