



# Information about lead

## For parents and guardians of a child with a raised blood lead level

You are being given this leaflet because your child had a blood test that has shown that they have been in contact with lead at some point.

If someone is in contact with lead it can harm their health. This can be if they have been in contact with lots of lead or a small amount over a long time. We know that lead can affect whether children grow and develop healthily, even though you cannot always see these effects.

**Your doctor can talk to you about why this test was taken, what the result shows and any health concerns you may have, including if any treatment is needed for your child.**

It is now very important to try to stop your child coming into contact with lead again. This information will help you to understand how your child may have been in contact with lead and what you can do to try to stop it happening again.

### What is lead?

Lead is a kind of metal that may be found in soil, rocks and water around us. In the past, lead was used to make lots of everyday things, like petrol, paint, pipes and even toys. But we now know that lead harms health, especially for children and pregnant women, so we should reduce how much we come into contact with it.

In the UK, lead is no longer used to make these things. But, sometimes, lead can still be in our homes, especially if you live in an older house. Some people also still use lead in their jobs, e.g. for roofing, or in hobbies, e.g. fishing. Lead is also still used in other parts of the world, so it can sometimes be found in things brought into this country from abroad.



## How could my child have come into contact with lead?

Someone can get lead into their body if they eat it (lick / mouth / chew), drink it or breathe it in. In the UK, a child may have come into contact with lead from:

- Paint in their home - up until the mid-1960s (and in some cases afterwards), lead was regularly used to make some kinds of paint. Contact with this can be worse if your house is being decorated, which can release old paint or paint dust which a child could then get in their mouth or breathe in.
- Eating / chewing soil which has lead in.
- Drinking tap water that has come through a lead pipe or where lead solder has been used - this usually only happens in older homes.
- Sucking / chewing on things that contain lead – these could be old things, like toys, or things that have been made abroad and don't meet UK or EU standards.
- Things, dust or fumes to do with an adult's work or hobbies (such as battery recycling, plumbing, roofing, shooting, making and using fishing weights and cast models, or making stained glass).
- Eating some traditional medicines, spices or food, such as those bought in another country, or food that has been cooked in pots that contain lead.

## What can I do to try to stop my child being in contact with lead?

- Regularly wash your child's hands with soap and water.
- Try to stop your child putting non-food things (such as soil) in their mouth.
- Try to stop your child picking, biting or chewing painted areas or things.
- Check that your child's toys are safe – look for these safety marks: 
- Only use water from the cold tap for drinking, cooking and making baby formula. If you would like to have your water supply tested for lead, you can speak to your water company about how to arrange this, or your local authority if you use a private water supply.
- Make sure that any medicines, spices, foods, or cooking equipment you use are bought in the UK from a trusted shop or supplier.
- Be careful if you are doing DIY or decorating. The easiest way of dealing with lead paintwork – if it is in good condition – is to paint over it with modern paint. If the paintwork is in bad condition and needs to be removed, follow specialist advice e.g. from the [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#). If you are not sure you



can deal with the paintwork safely by yourself, call in professionally qualified decorators.

- Adults who work with lead or use it in their hobbies should follow health and safety advice and take care to make sure their families don't come into contact with lead, lead fumes or dust. Further advice from HSE on using lead at work can be found [here](#).

### What happens next?

- Using this information, you should be able to try to stop your child, or any other family member, being in contact with more lead.
- The doctor looking after your child will talk to you about what to do next for your child's health, including if any more blood tests are needed. Please speak to them if you have any questions about this information.
- Depending on your child's blood test results, you may be contacted by Public Health Wales, who can work with you and your doctor to understand more about how your child might have been in contact with lead.

### More information is available on these links:

<a href="#">Public Health Wales: Lead exposure</a> 	<a href="#">Water Health Partnership for Wales: Lead in drinking water factsheet</a> 
<a href="#">Health and Safety Executive: Old lead paint</a> 	<a href="#">Health and Safety Executive: Working safely with lead</a> 