

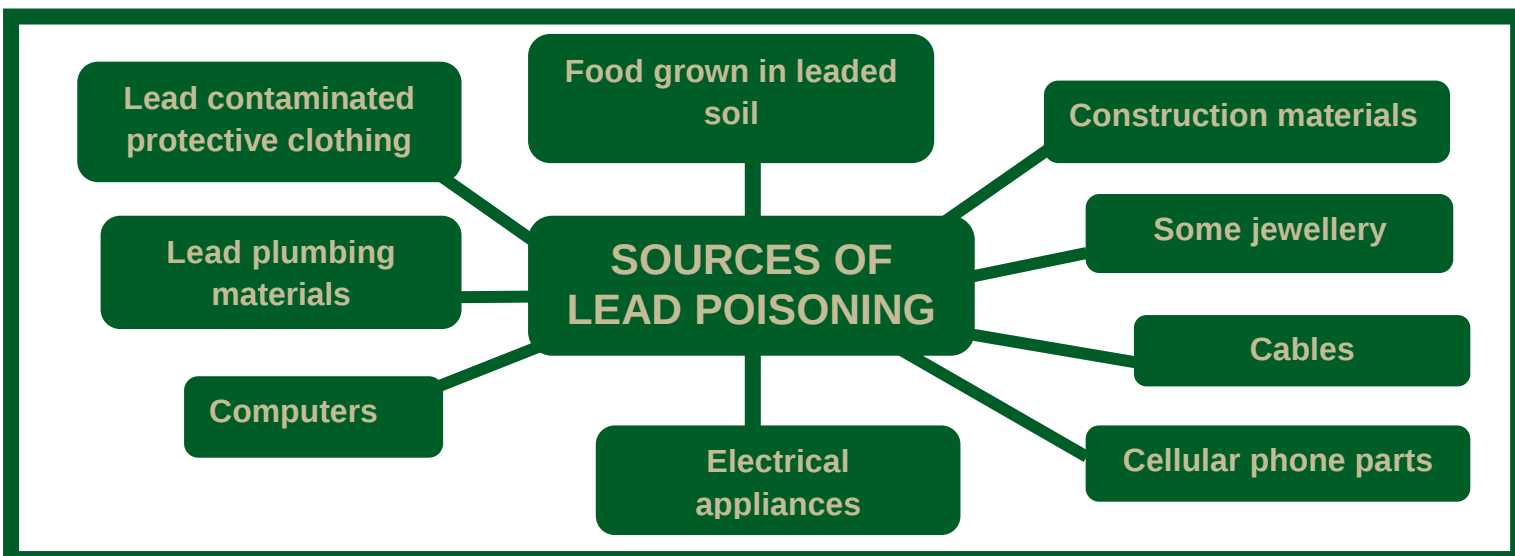
BE AWARE OF LEAD POISONING

Lead is a heavy metal, which is widely used in South African modern society but has toxic effects that can affect the health of the community. Children are especially at high risk of exposure because of their elevated rates of development, ingestion and metabolism. Due to the growing global concern of lead exposure, particularly in children, and to increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention, the United Nations Environmental Programme and the World Health Organization has declared the 3rd week of October to be International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action.

High levels of lead in children and unborn children result in effects such as:

- anemia,
- abnormal growth of organs,
- lowered IQ,
- hyperactivity, violent and aggressive behavior,
- hearing and learning difficulties at school.

Extremely high levels can even result in permanent muscle paralysis, brain damage, coma and death.



Exposure to lead can occur through:

- hand to mouth
- inhalation
- skin

Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable.



"Eliminate lead paint"

To protect yourself and children from lead poisoning, do the following:

- Children should wash their hands before eating, after playing, especially in dusty areas and before bedtime.
- Keep children's fingernails short.
- Give and enable children to eat healthy, balanced meal and not skip meals.
- Give and enable children calcium enriched foodstuffs e.g. green vegetables, yoghurt, milk, cheese, and nuts especially almonds, etc.
- Give and enable children to eat iron enriched foodstuffs e.g. eggs, red meat, chicken, liver, fish, cereal, beans, lentils, dark green vegetables, etc.
- Give and enable children to eat zinc enriched foodstuffs e.g. red meat, liver, fish, eggs, chicken, cheese, milk, peanut butter, etc.
- Do not allow children to chew nails, suck fingers or put non food objects in the mouth.
- Do not burn painted wood because it may contain lead.
- Do not allow children to play with old batteries and construction materials.
- Toys that children may put in their mouths should be washed often.
- Keep areas where children are accommodated clean and free from dust.
- Use damp clothes and mops to remove dust from floors and surfaces.
- Use unleaded petrol.
- Paint wall surfaces with a lead free paint.
- Paint play ground equipments with a lead free paint.
- Store food from open cans in glass or plastic containers.
- Use lead free dishes. Don't use chipped or cracked dishes to store or serve food.
- Be careful with hobbies that may lead to lead exposure e.g. melting lead to make fishing weights or sinkers, art craft that call for use of paints, glazes and solder.
- Do not melt lead near children, in the home and near fruits and vegetable garden sites.
- Try to make use of safer, non-lead sinkers, such as made from tin, tungsten, steel or bismuth.

For more information on lead poisoning contact:

National Department of Health, Environmental Health Directorate - **012 395-8781/9626/8748/8523**

The Medical Research Council of South Africa - **011 274 6060**

Poison Information Centre Helpline - **0861 555 777**

“Lead Free Children for a Healthy Future”

