



# LEAD AND THE DEVELOPING BRAIN

UNSAFE AT ANY LEVEL

LEAD REMOVAL IS CRITICAL FOR A HEALTHY BRAIN.

Lead exposure can have serious consequences for the health of young people. High levels of exposure to lead can cause severe damage to the brain and central nervous system, which may result in falling into a coma, convulsions, and even death. Children who survive severe lead poisoning may be left with permanent intellectual challenges and behavioral disorders. At lower levels of exposure that cause no obvious symptoms, lead still affects a child's brain.

## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS?

**Intelligence quotient (IQ):** Impaired cognitive capacity

**Attention:** Ability to maintain mental focus decreases

**Behavior:** Antisocial behavior increases

**Education:** Level of educational attainment is reduced

## WHO'S AT RISK?

Lead enters the body by breathing it in or swallowing it. One relatively common way is through lead pipes used for drinking water. Young children are particularly vulnerable to lead poisoning. Children from low-income households and those who live in housing built before 1978 are at the greatest risk.





**500,000  
CHILDREN  
IN THE  
U.S. HAVE  
ELEVATED  
BLOOD LEAD  
LEVELS**

## **HOW TO MINIMIZE RISK**

- Get a lead test
- Make a plan with a healthcare professional
- Search for lead in the home and environment
- Replace lead pipes
- Remove lead paint
- Clean up lead dust

## **HOW TO HELP**

There are often no apparent symptoms when a child is exposed to lead. Because of this, a blood test is the best way to determine if someone has been exposed. If a child may have been exposed, talk to a healthcare provider about getting a blood lead test. Based on the test results, experts can recommend follow-up actions and care.

**A HIDDEN THREAT  
TO YOUNG MINDS.**