

Student Handout

Lead

Lead is a cumulative poison that can enter the body as dust or fumes. It is toxic to virtually every human organ and can have serious long term health effects.

Symptoms of lead exposure include stomach pain, headache, irritability, and muscle pains. For female plumbers, exposure to lead can result in pre-term birth, reduced birth weight, and decreased mental ability in infants from mothers exposed during pregnancy.

Lead sheet, flashing, PVC products, lead solder, and a number of plumbing fittings all contain lead.

Safety tips

- Wash your hands carefully before eating.
- Do not consume food in workplaces where lead dust is present.
- Where possible, use alternatives to lead, such as acrylic coated flashing, lead-free PVC, and tin or silver solder.
- Change your clothes at the worksite when the job is done to prevent lead dust being taken home on clothes, bodies, and in cars.
- Wear PPE - respirators, face masks, overalls and gloves will all increase protection.
- If you think you've been exposed to lead in your workplace, see a doctor and get your blood lead level checked.

