

# Lead

Lead is a soft metal present in the environment that is highly poisonous when absorbed into the body. Lead can damage the brain, organs and nervous symptoms. This test screens for possible excessive exposure to lead.

## How is the lead absorbed in the body?

You can be exposed to lead by breathing in or ingesting lead dust, or, to a lesser degree, absorbing it through the skin. In adults, most lead is absorbed through inhalation, but in children, most absorption occurs through the digestive track. Once absorbed, lead is distributed to blood, soft tissues and bone. The most common sources of lead exposure are lead-based paint and contaminated dust in older buildings, but exposure can also come by contaminated air, water and soil.

## Why should I be tested for abnormal lead levels?

A person with abnormal lead levels may exhibit one or more of the following symptoms:

- Anemia
- Changes in mood
- Memory loss/seizures
- Nausea
- Weight loss
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Peripheral neuropathy
- Tremors

Many children have no physical symptoms at the time of the exposure, but potentially permanent damage can still be occurring. Testing for lead exposure should be considered in children who grow slower than children the same age or have anemia, sleep problems, hearing loss, or speech, language or attention deficits.

## What should I do if the results are abnormal or out of range?

It is always recommended you meet with a healthcare provider to determine what your laboratory test results mean to you. Your healthcare provider will review all of your test results and, combined with your health history, will be able to provide an accurate course of action.

**If your results were high:** If your results were high, it indicates excess lead in the blood but this may not reflect the total amount of lead in the body since most lead is stored in bones and teeth. It is recommended to share your results with your healthcare provider to determine if additional testing or treatment is needed.

**If your results were normal:** Much like high levels, normal levels of lead in the blood may not reflect the total amount of lead in the body. It is recommended to share your results with your healthcare provider.

## What other resources are available to learn more about my health and laboratory tests?

- Lab Tests Online: [labtestsonline.org](http://labtestsonline.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov)
- WebMD: [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)

*DLO Direct offers direct access to laboratory testing for informational purposes. A DLO Direct lab test result is not a medical diagnosis and is not intended as medical advice. Only a healthcare provider can interpret lab results and diagnose a medical condition or disease.*

*Because tests have not been ordered by a healthcare provider, third party entities, including Medicare and Medicaid, will not reimburse for these tests.*



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