



Protect Your Family from Lead in the Upper Columbia River

Background

Historic metal smelter operations have contaminated parts of the Upper Columbia River with lead and other contaminants. Sources of contamination include the Trail Smelter (Cominco or Teck Cominco Smelter) in B.C. Canada that has been in operation since approximately 1896, and the Le Roi Smelter in Northport, Washington that operated for fewer than 20 years. You or your child may be exposed to lead in the soil or air if you live close to the Upper Columbia River site or surrounding areas.

Can exposure to lead hurt my child or my family?

Lead can cause a variety of health problems, especially in young children and pregnant women. Even at low levels, lead can hurt your child. Lead affects many parts of your child's body, especially the brain. Children under the age of 7 are most at risk for the harmful effects of lead, but children between the ages of 12 to 24 months are especially at risk.

Exposure to lead at a young age can cause:

- Problems with learning and attention
- Slowed growth and development
- Behavioral problems, like hyperactivity or aggression

Talk to your child's healthcare provider about a blood lead level test.

Your child may need a blood lead level test if you live near the Upper Columbia River site. A blood lead level test shows how much lead your child may have in their blood. Use the checklist on the second page of this document to see if your child needs a blood lead level test.

How is my family exposed to lead near the Upper Columbia River site?

You or your family can be exposed to lead if you live near the Upper Columbia River site. Lead is not absorbed through the skin easily, but you or your family can be exposed to lead by breathing in dust or swallowing small amounts of soil and dust. People exposed to soil on a regular basis, such as children, gardeners, construction workers, and landscapers, should take steps to lower their exposure to lead. You may have a higher risk of lead exposure if you also live in a house built before 1978, make weights for fishing or hunting ammunition, or if you drink water that goes through lead pipes or plumbing fixtures with lead.

What can I do to protect my child from lead?

Limiting exposure to lead is the most important way to protect you and your child's health. Take healthy actions to protect yourself and your family from lead in soil:

- Wash your hands with soap and water
- Take off your shoes at the door
- Take off dusty clothes right away when you come indoors
- Damp mop or wipe and vacuum with a HEPA filter once a week
- Wash children's toys, bedding, and pacifiers frequently
- Cover or replace bare patches of soil in your yard to keep toys out of the dirt and reduce human contact
- Wear shoes, gloves, and a mask when gardening and working outdoors in dusty conditions
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before eating
- Wipe your pets' paws before they enter your home and brush and bathe them regularly

To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov



Does my child need a blood lead test?

Does your child...

- Live near the Upper Columbia River site?
- Live in or regularly visit a home built before 1978, especially if it has had recent repairs?
- Live at or regularly visit a property where surface soil test confirmed elevated levels of lead?
- Have a sibling or friend with an elevated blood lead level?
- Have a parent or caregiver who works with lead, either at their job or their hobby?
- Come from a country outside the U.S.?
- Use traditional remedies or cosmetics, such as greta, azarcon, or kohl?
- Have Apple Health/Medicaid?

If you answered YES to any of these questions or if you think your child has had any contact with lead, your child needs a blood lead test. Talk to their health care provider about testing their blood lead levels.

Questions? Contact us!

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