



Lead Poisoning (Plumbism)



Overview

Lead is a toxic metal. If you breathe it in or swallow small amounts of it over time, it builds up in your body. It's very dangerous for children's growing bodies and brains. Unfortunately, the signs of lead poisoning may go unnoticed until the damage is done.

Lead sources

Lead can get into your body if you eat or drink something contaminated with lead. Or you may breathe in lead dust. You can find lead in and around older houses and buildings painted with leaded paint. Soil can be contaminated with lead. Drinking water can be contaminated if it passes through lead pipes or pipes joined with lead solder. High lead levels can be in some types of pottery and imported goods. And, you may be exposed to lead at your workplace.

Symptoms

Lead poisoning creates a wide range of problems. In babies, it can cause premature birth, low weight and slow growth. In children, it can cause developmental delays and learning problems. It can cause physical problems such as vomiting, abdominal pain, weight loss and fatigue. In adults, it can cause high blood pressure, headache, and joint and muscle pain. It can cause problems with memory and with moods. And, it can cause problems with fertility and pregnancy.

Treatment

Lead poisoning is treated by first removing the source of the contamination. Then, medications help remove lead from the body. Your doctor will create a care plan that's right for you.