

# Lead Poisoning



## **Background information for Teachers:**

Lead is a useful, but toxic, heavy metal that is used in petrol, paint, computers, television sets, electrical appliances, motor cars, batteries and many other products.

Lead particles tend to concentrate in dust and soil, but may also be found in the air. Children may get lead particles into their bodies when they chew their nails, suck their fingers or put toys, sticks, stones and other items into their mouths. Children can also get lead into their bodies when they inhale exhaust fumes from cars because lead is added to petrol.

High lead levels in children are dangerous and have been linked to lowered IQ scores, learning difficulties and poor performance at school, hyperactivity, short concentration spans, hearing problems, decreased growth, anaemia and even brain damage.

Children can have high blood lead levels without anyone knowing it, because you can't taste or smell lead. Only a blood test can tell whether a child's blood lead level is too high.

The good news is that simple steps can be taken to protect children from exposure to lead in the environment. These activities will help you to teach your students about avoiding lead exposure.

## **Content for the Activity:**

### **What is lead?**

Lead is a poison that can harm you if it gets into your body. It is a metal that is found in petrol, paint, computers, TVs, electrical appliances, batteries and many other products. Lead gets into dust, soil and air. If you swallow or breathe lead into your body it can hurt you.

### **Where is it found?**

- Air- because of petrol fumes.
- Paint.
- Dust.
- Soil.
- Batteries.
- Construction materials.

### **How can you protect yourself?**

#### **Advice for Children**

- Wash hands with soap before eating, after playing in dusty areas and before sleeping.
- Keep fingernails short and clean.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet and do not skip meals.
- Eat Calcium (found in green vegetables such as spinach, yoghurt, milk, cheese and nuts- especially almonds.)
- Eat Iron (eggs, lean red meat and chicken, liver, fish, cereal, beans, peas, lentils, dark green leafy vegetables such as spinach.)
- Eat Zinc (red meat, liver, fish, eggs, chicken, cheese, milk, peanut butter.)
- Don't chew nails, suck fingers or put non-food objects (sticks, stones, toys, etc) into your mouth.
- Don't burn painted wood because it may contain lead.
- Don't play with old batteries, construction materials

#### **Advice for Caregivers**

- Keep areas clean and dust-free.
- Use damp clothes and mops to remove dust from floors and surfaces.
- Use unleaded petrol.



World Health Organization



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