


Dangers of lead for roofers!

Do you work with lead
Do you handle lead flashing
Do you know how much lead is in your blood 

Exposure to lead: Health damage can be permanent

- Lead can have many subtle, but serious, long term health effects
- Lead is a cumulative poison. When inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin, it is toxic to virtually every human organ
- From a single exposure, lead is quickly distributed and stored through the body where it remains a long term source of internal exposure
- Exposure to lead can have a broad range of health effects depending on the amount of lead present and the length of exposure. The greater the exposure, the greater the impact on health

Protect yourself when working with lead

Wear protective work clothing such as respirator, safety glasses and gloves

- Never eat, drink, or smoke in the work area
- Always practice a high standard of personal hygiene. Wash your hands and face and scrub your nails with soap and water before eating or drinking and before leaving work or smoking
- Food, cigarettes and tobacco can easily become contaminated when you handle lead
- Lead can be absorbed through sweat pores in the skin
- Shower and change into clean clothes and shoes at work before you go home
- Keep dirty work clothes and shoes in a separate bag from your clean street clothes
- If the above recommended hygiene is not possible, purchase hand wipes for use prior to eating, drinking or smoking and be sure to shower as soon as you get home and wash your work clothes in a separate load from your non-work clothes and the rest of the family's clothes

If you've been exposed to lead, ask your doctor to test your blood for lead

There's no such thing as a 'safe' level of lead in the blood...

- A high lead blood level is currently defined as more than 10 micrograms of lead per decilitre of blood (10 µg/dL) and it is the Australian public health goal for all Australians to have a blood lead level below 10 µg/dL. However, an increased risk of early death from heart attack or stroke has been found for adults with blood levels as low as 2 µg/dL

- Even if you have no symptoms, damage to your health can be occurring that may not show up until many years later. If you are working with lead, it is very important that you find out how much lead is in your blood

If you have some of these symptoms you may have a high blood lead level

• Hypertension	• Slow reaction time	• Irritability	• Stomach pains
• Hearing loss	• Headaches	• Constipation	• Anaemia
• Balance problems	• Tiredness	• Nausea	• Weight loss

What health damage can occur with continued exposure?

Studies have shown that even low levels of lead in adults can:

- **Increase your blood pressure**— which increases your risk of early death from heart attack or stroke
- **Decrease your brain function**— making it more difficult to think, learn, and remember, especially as you age
- **Decrease your kidney function**— making it more difficult to expel toxic waste products
- **Increase the risk** of low sperm count, low sperm motility and impotence, and thus infertility, as well as minor genetic changes in sperm, and thus **birth defects** in the children of male lead workers
- If you are a woman, it can **harm the physical and mental development of your baby** before it's born and increase the chances of you having a miscarriage

Wherever possible, choose lead-free alternative products to protect your health, your family and the environment

Need further information?

Safe Work Australia – phone **02 6121 5317**

National Code of Practice for the Control and Safe Use of Inorganic Lead at Work [NOHSC:2015(1994)]

http://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/AboutSafeWorkAustralia/WhatWeDo/Publications/Documents/265/NationalStandard_ControlOfInorganicLeadAtWork_NOHSC1012-1994_PDF.pdf

WorkCover NSW, phone **131050**. Code of Practice for the Control of Hazardous Substances (1996)

http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/formspublications/publications/Pages/WC00153_ControlofWorkplaceHazardousSubstancesCod_.aspx

Workers Health Centre, Granville **02 9749 7666** <http://www.workershealth.com.au/facts005.html>

Workcover Queensland **1300 362 128**

Workcover Victoria **1800 136 089**

WorkSafe Western Australia **1300 307 877**

The LEAD Group (information and referral service) FREECALL **1800 626 086** <http://www.lead.org.au>

Health and Safety Fact Sheet Information Source: The Lead Group Inc. Global Lead Advice & Support Service, incorporating Lead Advisory Service Australia