

# Lead

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## Test Overview

This test measures the amount of lead in the blood. Lead is a poisonous (toxic) metal that can damage the brain and other parts of the body. A lead blood test may be done on blood drawn from the vein, a finger (finger stick), or the heel (heel stick).

A person can be exposed to lead:

- By eating or drinking lead-contaminated foods, water, or other material (such as paint chips).
- By breathing dust or smoke containing lead.
- Through skin contact with lead.

There is no safe age to be exposed to lead. Adults can have problems from lead poisoning, but it is most harmful to children younger than age 6 (especially those younger than age 3) because it can permanently affect their growth and development. A pregnant woman who is exposed to lead can pass it to her baby (fetus). Lead can also be passed to a baby through the mother's breast milk.

## Why It Is Done

A lead blood test is done to:

- Diagnose lead poisoning.
- Look for lead poisoning in people who work with lead or lead products or live in places where the chance of poisoning is high, such as in a large city.

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## How to Prepare

No special preparation is required before having this test.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you are using any herbal medicines.

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## How It Is Done

Blood tests for lead should be done by a lab experienced in proper technique.

### **Blood sample from a vein**

The health professional(DOCTOR) taking a sample of your blood will:

- Wrap an elastic band(tourniquet) around your upper arm to stop the flow of blood. This makes the veins below the band larger so it is easier to put a needle into the vein.
- Clean the needle site with alcohol.
- Put the needle into the vein. More than one needle stick may be needed.
- Attach a tube to the needle to fill it with blood.
- Remove the band from your arm when enough blood is collected.
- Put a gauze pad or cotton ball over the needle site as the needle is removed.
- Put pressure on the site and then put on a bandage.

### **Blood sample from a heel stick (in case of children)**

- For a heel stick blood sample, several drops of blood are collected from the heel of your baby. The skin of the heel is first cleaned with alcohol and then punctured with a small sterile lancet. Several drops of blood are collected in a small tube. When enough blood has been collected, a gauze pad or cotton ball is placed over the puncture site. Pressure is maintained on the puncture site briefly, and then a small bandage is usually applied.
- A heel stick must be done carefully to prevent contamination of the sample from lead on the skin. If a heel stick blood sample comes back positive for lead, a sample of blood from your baby's vein will be tested to confirm the results.

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## Results

This test measures the amount of lead in the blood. Lead is a poisonous (toxic) metal that can damage the brain and other parts of the body.

### Acceptable levels

Although it is not normal to have lead in your body, a small amount is present in most people. Values may vary from lab to lab. Results are usually available within 1 week.

Lead	
<b>Acceptable:</b>	0–9 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) or less than 0.48 micromoles per liter (mcmol/L)

If your blood test result is 10 mcg/dL or higher, your doctor will want you to have another blood test. How soon you will be retested is based on the results of your first test. If the result is only slightly high, you may be retested in a month. If it is very high, your doctor may want to repeat the test within a few days.

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### High levels

High levels of lead in the blood are caused by lead poisoning.

For Result Range please refer Test Report.

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## What Affects the Test?

Reasons you may not be able to have the test or why the results may not be helpful include:

- Contamination from the skin. Low levels of lead can be found almost anywhere, including on the skin.
- Having low iron levels in your blood, which causes an increase in the absorption of lead.

IMAGE: EFFECT OF LEAD ON THE BODY

