

Lead in Firearm/Ammunition Users

What is lead?

Lead is a naturally occurring metal and is used widely in manufacturing because it is soft and resists corrosion. Lead dust and residue can be swallowed or breathed in, and large amounts can be stored in bones and teeth, which can be harmful.

Ways you could be exposed to lead

Handling firearms, shooting at ranges, or making your own ammunition can expose you to dangerous lead dust and residues.

You can be exposed through:

- Lead dust from firing or cleaning guns
- Making or casting bullets
- Shooting ranges with poor ventilation

What are the health risks of lead exposure?

- Headaches, fatigue, joint pain
- Anaemia (reduced ability of your blood to transport oxygen in the body)
- Raised blood pressure
- Kidney damage (more common in those with diabetes)
- Neurological issues such as problems with memory, concentration or co-ordination
- Lowered fertility in both men and women
- In severe cases: seizures or coma

Very high lead levels or untreated lead exposure can lead to permanent health effects.

Tips to reduce lead exposure and prevent bringing lead dust home

- Always wash hands and face after shooting or reloading
- Wear a P2 respirator mask when cleaning dust at the shooting range
- Don't eat, drink or smoke while handling firearms and/or bullets containing lead or in shooting areas
- Change out of contaminated clothes before leaving ammunition/shooting site
- Wash contaminated clothes separately
- Consider using non-lead ammunition if possible
- Clean shooting area, vehicles and home using wet methods or HEPA vacuums*

**HEPA vacuums are equipped with a filtered designed to trap very small dust particles and allergens.*