

Lead exposure in Fishing Gear

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

Making or modifying fishing sinkers made of lead can expose you to dangerous lead dust, fumes and residues.

You can be exposed through:

- Melting lead to make fishing sinkers
- Areas where fishing sinkers are made which can become contaminated with lead
- Handling fishing sinkers and lures that contain lead
- Biting the knot on the fishing line to keep the fishing sinker or lure in place
- Accidentally swallowing fishing sinkers or lures (this is a concern for children)

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

- Always wash hands and face after handling lead sinkers or lures.
- Don't eat, drink or smoke while handling lead objects.
- Don't put lead sinkers in your mouth or bite down on fishing lines.
- Wear a P2 respirator mask if making lead sinkers and lures.
- Keep fishing equipment out of reach from children.
- Consider using non-lead sinkers and lures and avoid making lead sinkers.
- Clean fishing sinker/lure making areas, vehicles and home using wet methods or HEPA vacuums* if there is lead exposure.

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