

## ***Lead in Pregnancy***

### **What is lead?**

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

### **Why lead is dangerous during pregnancy**

Lead swallowed or breathed in by pregnant women can pass to their unborn baby and harm their developing brain and body. Significant lead exposure before pregnancy can also be a concern, as lead can be released from the bones into the blood during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Risks to the baby include:

- Low birth weight
- Premature birth
- Developmental delays
- Learning and behavioural problems in childhood

Risks to pregnant women include anaemia, fatigue, high blood pressure, kidney damage, miscarriage or still birth.

### **Ways you could be exposed to lead**

- Drinking water from lead-soldered pipes
- Imported toys, candies, spices (e.g. turmeric and saffron) or cosmetics (e.g. kohl, kajal or surma)
- Imported ceremonial powders, or Ayurvedic or traditional medicines and remedies
- Dust or soil with lead contamination
- Lead risk work – demolition and renovation of old homes (especially those built before 1970), metal recycling, old telecommunication cables
- Lead risk hobbies – shooting, making glazed pottery or stained glass, making fishing sinkers, ammunition or toy soldiers
- Household members exposed to lead risk environments and bringing lead dust home

### **How to Stay Safe**

- Avoid lead risk work, hobbies or areas (e.g. lead paint removal)
- Eat regular meals rich in iron, calcium, and vitamin C
- Use only cold tap water for drinking and cooking
- Flush taps for 2-3 minutes if water hasn't been used in a while
- Avoid using imported foods, remedies/medicines or traditional cosmetics
- Lead dust in home or vehicle to be cleaned using wet mops/wipes or HEPA vacuumed\*

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

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