

# Lead sinkers and your health

## *Did you know?*

### **Making lead sinkers could be harmful to you and your family's health**

- Some people in Victoria have been poisoned by manufacturing lead fishing sinkers in their homes.
- Melting lead produces a poisonous gas, which can be breathed in.
- When lead products are ground or sanded, small lead dust particles can spread around your house and be breathed in or swallowed.

### **Young children are especially at risk:**

- Lead dust can get on children's hands and be taken into their body. They absorb more of the lead than adults do, and their growing brains are more easily affected.
- Pregnant women pass the lead onto their unborn children.

### **Children can be poisoned by swallowing lead sinkers**

- Children can swallow fishing sinkers and may need to have them removed in hospital. If the sinkers remain in the bowel for some time, lead poisoning may occur.

### **How lead can affect health**

Lead affects the body in many ways, depending on how much is taken up and how long someone has been exposed to it. It can remain in the body for many years.

- Lead can cause:
  - reduced brain function, including memory and concentration problems, learning and behaviour problems in children
  - headaches, tiredness, weakness
  - blood circulation problems
  - reduced kidney function
  - reduced fertility.
- You do not have to be obviously sick to have raised levels of lead in the blood.

### **Some ways to reduce lead exposure**

#### **If you make your own lead sinkers:**

- Don't work with lead in your home, where you could contaminate surfaces with lead.
- Keep children and pregnant women out of areas where you are working.
- Do not use a grinder, sander or saw on lead materials, as this may generate dust.
- Shower and change clothing and shoes before entering the home.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking or smoking.
- Work in a well-ventilated area.
- Wear a respirator.
- Keep your work area clean.
- Clean floors and walls to reduce the amount of lead dust.

## *The safest option is not to manufacture lead fishing sinkers yourself*

#### **Other things to think about:**

- Never put a lead sinker in your mouth.
- Always wash your hands thoroughly after handling lead sinkers or cleaning out your tackle box.
- Don't leave lead sinkers where children can access them.
- Consider a non-lead alternative.

### **Lead in the environment can also be a problem**

- Lead can get into the environment from lead fishing tackle. It remains there for a long time and may get into animals and birds, causing illness or death.
- So do the right thing: always clean up your fishing spot and pick up dropped or tangled gear.

#### **For more information:**

##### **The Better Health Channel**


<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au>

##### **Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts**

<http://www.environment.gov.au/atmosphere/airquality/publications/recactivities.html>

##### **The Department of Human Services**

on 1300 761 874



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