

# Why is Soil Lead Bad

Factsheet #2

## Effects of Long Term Lead Poisoning

Every part of your body is affected by lead. Children under seven years old and pregnant women are most at risk. In children, lead poisoning can cause<sup>1</sup>:

- Behavior and learning problems
- Hearing Problems
- Lower IQ
- Slowed growth

During pregnancy, lead stops the baby from developing properly and can cause a miscarriage.<sup>1</sup> In all adults, lead poisoning causes problems with the heart, kidneys, and reproductive system.<sup>1</sup>

## Lead Poisoning

Gardening in soil with high levels of lead may cause lead poisoning. Small amounts of lead enter your body by breathing in dust from lead-contaminated dirty soil and eating vegetables that are covered in dust from dirty soil. Lead builds up inside your body over months and years and slowly makes you sick. The worst effects of lead poisoning don't happen until harmful amounts of lead are already inside of your body. Once lead is inside of you, it is difficult to get it out of your body.<sup>1</sup> That is why it's so important to know if there is lead in your environment!

## Treatment of Lead Poisoning from Dirty Soils<sup>2</sup>

The first step to treat lead poisoning is to stop contact with the dirty soil in order to stop lead from getting into your body. A healthy diet with food rich in iron and calcium helps your body process and remove lead slowly. In cases where people have large amounts of lead in their bodies, chelation therapy may be recommended. If you or a family member are worried about lead poisoning, ask a doctor about symptoms and possible treatment options.

## Level of Risk

At low levels, lead in soil can be perfectly safe. Lead in soil becomes unsafe when there is too much. The only way to know how much lead is in your garden soil is to take a soil test. The test will tell you how much lead is in your soil by giving you the number of PPMs of lead in your soil.

### What is PPM?

PPM means parts-per-million. 100 ppm of lead in your soil is the same as one penny in \$100.<sup>1</sup> It's a really small number, but more than 100 ppm in your soil will make you sick!<sup>1</sup>

<b>Low Risk</b>	Less than 100 ppm	Your soil is safe! <sup>3</sup>
<b>Moderate Risk</b>	100 to 400 ppm	Lead in your soil could be a risk to your health. <sup>3</sup>
<b>High Risk</b>	More than 400 ppm	The amount of lead in your soil is dangerous. <sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> EPA, "Learn about Lead" (<https://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead>).

<sup>2</sup> Kids Healthy from Nemours, "Lead Poisoning," (<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/lead-poisoning.html>).

<sup>3</sup> EPA, "Technical Review Workgroup Recommendations Regarding Gardening and Reducing Exposure to Lead-Contaminated Soil," (<https://semspub.epa.gov/work/HQ/174577.pdf>).