

## Lead safe recreation:

# Lead from fishing

- Anglers can be exposed to lead when handling fishing tackle or making weights, jigs, sinkers or spinnerbaits from lead.
- Lead is especially harmful to children and pregnant women. Lead can damage the brain, nervous system, kidneys, and immune system.

**Lead poisoning is preventable! Protect yourself and your family. There is no safe level of lead.**



## Be aware of the sources of lead when fishing or making lead weights

- Fishing sinkers or tackle may be made from solid lead.
- Lead dust from fishing sinkers can contaminate tackle boxes, tables, and other surfaces.
- If you make your own lead sinkers at home, lead dust and fumes can contaminate your work area and harm you or your family if done improperly.
- Batteries contain lead and other harmful chemicals and should be used and disposed of properly.

## Prevent lead exposures when handling tackle

- Lead is dangerous when consumed. Never put a lead sinker in your mouth or bite down on split shot - use pliers instead.
- Always wash your hands after handling lead sinkers or cleaning out your tackle box.
- Consider using non-lead alternatives. Sinkers and split shots are now available in less toxic compounds such as tin, bismuth, and tungsten. Ask your tackle shop or retailer to carry non-lead alternatives.
- Properly dispose of any batteries used while fishing and do not throw batteries into the water or wildlife areas.
- Never throw old fishing gear into the water or shore. Discard old lead sinkers and jigs at your local household hazardous waste collection site.
- Lead can leach over time, contaminating water sources, wildlife areas, and harming birds and other animals.
- Keep your work area clean and well ventilated, when casting lead sinkers at home. Keep children out of your work area.



## Your family may also be at risk of lead poisoning

- Lead is especially dangerous for children and pregnant women. Children's small, developing bodies absorb more lead for their size.
- Children could be exposed to lead through fishing materials when:
  - Putting fishing sinkers in their mouths.
  - Handling sinkers, then eating or putting their hands in their mouth.
  - Handling tackle boxes and fishing gear contaminated with lead.
  - Breathing in or ingesting lead dust or particles from a lead casting area.

## Test your blood lead level

- Contact your health care provider and ask for a simple blood lead level test for you and your family. This is the best way to determine if you or your child has been exposed to lead. These tests are covered by Medicaid and most private health insurance.
- There is no safe blood lead level in children. However, a blood lead level above 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) indicates increased risk of health effects.
- Adults exposed to lead may develop difficulties with memory, attention, learning, hearing loss, infertility, and high blood pressure

## Resources

*Idaho Environmental Health Program lead page -*  
[healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/environmental-health/lead](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/environmental-health/lead)

*Idaho Fish and Game: Fishing -* [idfg.idaho.gov/fish](http://idfg.idaho.gov/fish)

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agency -*  
[www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead)

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -*  
[www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/default.htm)

## Contact

*Idaho Department of Health & Welfare Environmental Health Program*  
[healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/environmentalhealth](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/environmentalhealth)

BCEH@dhw.idaho.gov

(800) 445-8647



**Children exposed to lead may develop lower IQ, learning disabilities, stunted growth, kidney damage, and attention-related behaviors, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).**



**Pregnant women exposed to lead may experience low birth-weight babies, premature births, miscarriage, and stillbirth. Adults exposed to lead may develop difficulties with memory, attention, learning, hearing loss, infertility, and high blood pressure.**



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

September 2021