

Important Biological Properties

- Lead bioaccumulates in bones, teeth, nails, and hair.
- Pb doesn't degrade.
- Transferrable across the placental and blood-brain barriers.
- Multiple ingestion routes by eating, drinking and breathing.
- Treatable with chelation therapy

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Chronic Exposure

- Long term, low dose
 - Reproductive and early development
 - Various studies suggest fetal toxicity (birth outcome, growth, mental development) starts at a relatively low blood concentration, 8-20 μ g/dL in the mother.
 - Cognitive and other neurobehavioral effects
 - CDC and the EPA have proposed a 10 $\mu g/dL$ blood concentration limit.

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Neurodevelopmental Toxicity Mechanisms

- Lead alters the effectiveness of the intracellular adhesion molecule in the brain, thereby affecting brain structural development.
- Lead strongly interferes with the Ca²⁺ messenger system.
 - Ca²⁺ is used throughout the body as an intracellular messenger that converts electrical impulses to hormonal signals.
 - Pb²⁺ either replaces or inhibits removal of Ca²⁺.

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Acute Pb Toxicity

Blood concentration $> 50 - 100 \mu g/dL$

• Anemia, reduced red blood cell levels.

Central nervous system

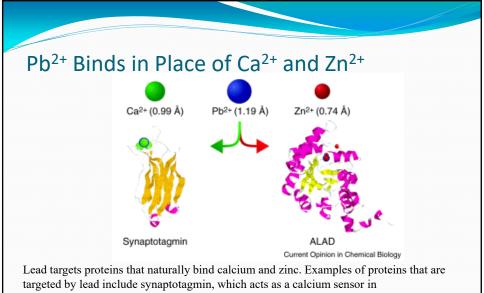
- Encephalopathy: characterized by excess water in the brain.
- Mechanism: blood/brain barrier properties altered as Pb²⁺ substitutes for Ca²⁺.

Renal (kidney) system

Disturbs amino acid and glucose cycling.

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Lead targets proteins that naturally bind calcium and zinc. Examples of proteins that are targeted by lead include synaptotagmin, which acts as a calcium sensor in neurotransmission, and ALAD, the second enzyme in the heme biosynthetic pathway. Despite its size, lead (1.19 Å, blue sphere and circles) can substitute for calcium (0.99 Å, green spheres) in synaptotagmin and zinc (0.74 Å, red spheres) in ALAD.

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H.A. Godwin, Current Opinion in Chemical Biology 2001, 5:223-227

Pb Chelation Therapy



- Succimer (meso-2, 3-dimercaptosuccinic acid, DMSA) is the drug of choice for Pb chelation therapy and is also recommended for asymptomatic children with blood lead levels 40 – 70 mg/dL.
- Next are CaNa, EDTA
- D-penicillamine

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