

**Lead safe recreation:**

# Lead in wild game meat



- Wild game meat harvested with lead ammunition can be contaminated with lead fragments or lead dust, creating health risks for people who eat the meat.
- Most lead particles in wild game meat will be too small to see, feel, or sense when chewing.
- Pregnant women and children are most at risk from eating meat harvested using lead bullets or shot.

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



## Reduce lead exposure when hunting and processing wild game meat

- **Choose safer ammunition.**
  - Due to lower velocities, shotgun slugs and muzzleloader bullets leave less lead than commonly used high-powered soft-point or rapid expanding rifle bullets.
  - Use non-lead, copper or other high-weight retention ammunition.
- **Shoot carefully.**
  - Shots that hit large bones, like the shoulder of a deer, elk, or bear, will fragment more and distribute more lead particles.
- **Process wild game meat safely.**
  - Trim meat liberally around bullet or slug paths to minimize possible lead exposure. Lead fragments can be found as far as 18 inches away from the wound channel.
  - Avoid cuts of meat from areas where heavy bone impacts occurred.
  - Examine the carcass for previous wounds that may contain lead.
  - Avoid washing the carcass, as this may spread any lead fragments.
  - Throw away any trimmed or bruised meat or meat that contains hair, dirt, bone fragments, or grass.
  - If a commercial processor butchers your animal, verify your meat will not be mixed with meat from an unknown source.

# Protect yourself and your family from lead exposure

- Swallowing lead fragments can cause serious health problems.
- Children have a greater risk of lead poisoning than adults. Their small, developing bodies absorb more lead for their size.
- Children exposed to lead may develop lower IQ, learning disabilities, stunted growth, kidney damage, 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.

## Test your blood lead levels

- Contact your health care provider and ask for a simple blood lead level test for you and your family. These tests are covered by Medicaid and most private health insurance.
- Children's blood lead levels should be tested by their pediatrician. There is no safe blood lead level in children. However, a blood lead level above 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/L) indicates increased risk of health effects.

## Resources

*Idaho Environmental Health Program's lead page - [healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/EnvironmentalHealth/IndoorEnvironment/Lead/tabid/941/Default.aspx](http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Health/EnvironmentalHealth/IndoorEnvironment/Lead/tabid/941/Default.aspx)*

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

*Idaho Bureau of Land Management - [www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/recreation-programs/recreational-shooting/idaho](http://www.blm.gov/programs/recreation/recreation-programs/recreational-shooting/idaho)*

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

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

### Contact

*Idaho Department of Health and Welfare  
Environmental Health Program*

*[www.environmentalhealth.dhw.idaho.gov](http://www.environmentalhealth.dhw.idaho.gov)*

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*(800) 445-8647*



**Children and pregnant women are most at risk from lead exposure**



**Never eat, drink, or smoke while handling lead**



**Remember to stay safe while enjoying your hobby!**



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
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