Lead Poisoning You Should Be Aware Of

Written by Dr. Harold Gunatillake – Health writer
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Recently in a battery factory in the Mengxi village in China, workers have been poisoned by lead emissions from the factory, which had operated for six years despite environment violations. Ultimately 233 adults and 99 children were found having high concentrations of lead in their blood.
In the past two and a half years, thousands of workers, villagers and children in at least nine of mainland China's 31 province-level regions have been found to be suffering from toxic levels of lead exposure, mostly caused by pollution from battery factories and metal smelters. The cases underscore a pattern of government neglect seen in industry after industry as China strives for headlong growth with only poor safeguards.
Lead can creep into your body in two ways: inhalation (breathing) and ingestion (eating). You can swallow lead dust if it gets into your food, including drinks. You can swallow lead dust even if you don't wash your hands before eating your rice and curry meal. Batik designed plates manufactured in Sri Lanka were banned in Australia in the 1970's due to high lead content.
Lead getting into our bodies will not be excreted as most other poisons by detoxification in the liver and excretion through your urine. It also has a tendency to build up over the years in your body. High levels damage the brain, kidneys, nerves and blood cells. This is what we call lead poisoning.
Early symptoms of lead poisoning you should be aware of:

- Unaccountable tiredness could be a very early symptom.
- Irritability due to no obvious cause can be a symptom and could make your family irritable and unhappy too.
- Muscle and joint pains are common among workers as they grow older. If you suddenly feel aches and pains in your body that could be an early symptom.
- Constant headaches, stomach aches and cramps are the other symptoms.

Lead could be in the air at your workplace. Your employer should check frequently the levels of lead in the air of the workplace if required or suspected. The lead in the air of a workplace should not be more than 50ug (micrograms) per meter, averaged over eight hours.
The air monitoring results should be available to workers exposed, by law.
If workers are exposed to levels above 30ug per meter for more than 30 days a year, the workers need to be checked by medical teams, including regular blood testing.
The occupational doctors employed in factories should be aware of and know if employees are exposed to lead poisoning though they don't notice any health problems.
Precautionary and safe work practices in such working places should include:

- Wear separate work clothes and shoes or boots while at work.
- Don't wear your work clothes and shoes or boots home from work, and don't wear them when you aren't at work.
- Wash and dry your work clothes separately. Don't mix your work clothes with clothes from other people in your family when the laundry is done.
- Wash your hands and face before you eat or drink.

Lead contamination at home
Lead is present in lead-based paint and lead contaminated soil and water. The paints are mainly found in older homes. This paint can enter your body through flakes, dust and minute chips. Water contamination with lead can be picked up from your old lead piping. Today, in the newer construction

PVC pipes are substituted.
Read more: http://www.righthealth.com/topic/signs_of_lead_poisoning/overview/Family Doctor20_s#ixzz1PKzYZQhh
Lead poisoning on Sri Lankan Roads
You will remember up till early 2000 the air quality in Sri Lanka's major cities was deteriorating to the extent that the smoke from belching buses clouded most of the main cities and suburbs. The air was polluted with high levels of lead from lead gasoline and the people walking on the roads, waiting for their buses at the bus stands were inhaling large volumes of this polluted air with no hapless concern. There were many children admitted to our hospitals with behavior problems, and many adults unfit to work in their workplaces. On most city roads the three wheelers have almost taken over the roads and parking lots. They are a menace to other vehicle drivers, but transport community service they render is immeasurable. These two stroke engines fitted in them, emit substantial quantities of hydrocarbons (HC), carbon monoxide (CO) and particulate matter.
These pollutants have significant adverse health effects and deteriorate environmental quality. The contribution to urban air pollution where these vehicles are in use has become an increasingly common phenomenon. This is especially noticed in densely populated areas in towns and villages relying on two-wheel vehicles as an essential means of transportation.
The government did put a ban on two stroke engine three wheelers a few years back; stopping imports by year 2012, but will allow the existing ones to run on the roads. Most three wheelers now use lead free high octane gasoline, but it is unlikely that the pollution level will be eased. The buses and vans, including trains are the other culprits polluting our air. In some countries the emission from exhaust gases in tuks tuks have been minimized by catalysts technology used to treat exhaust gases from two wheeler vehicles. Now all three wheelers imported have four stroke engines and to what degree the pollution will be minimized, time will tell us.
Catalytic exhaust controls have been developed in most countries and are generally recognized to be the most cost-effective way to meet stringent emission Standards. Thus, fully developed and proven emission control systems are readily available and being implemented in some countries.
Current vehicle inspection system in Sri Lanka focuses on the physical fitness of the vehicle including smoke levels.
Vehicle inspection is carried out at three levels, one at the original registration for all vehicles, second is only an annual inspection for commercial vehicles (buses and trucks), and last is on roadside by the Police. Most of the older vehicles seen on our roads are not really roadworthy. How they escape inspection is difficult to explain.
Agrochemical poisoning in Sri Lanka
The number of victims from chemical poisoning admitted to hospitals in Sri Lanka during 1975 and 1983, stood at around 11,000-15,000 each year, with the year 1983 recording 16,649 admissions. About 75 percent of such cases of poisoning were due to self-ingestion while accidental and occupational poisoning formed the balance. Principal agricultural districts like Kurunegala, Jaffna, Vavuniya, Nuwara-Eliya and Badulla recorded the highest incidence of poisoning. (ref: Forensic Science International Vol 36, Issues 1-2 Jan 1988).
The readers of this article will realize that these pollutants from gas emissions and pesticides are a danger to our people dwelling in the cities or in villagers. Where can you breathe fresh air in the paradise? Think about it! Possibly in well air-conditioned vehicles and then breathe easy.