

## BHEKISISA TRACKING EMBED CODE



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Headline: What does lead poisoning do to your kids' brain?

Blurb: Children who are exposed to the toxic heavy metal, lead, are more likely to commit violent crime and to get lower scores on intelligence tests as adults. But experts and industry groups say the government isn't doing enough to manage lead.

Bullets:

- Children with lead poisoning are more likely to commit violent crime as adults and to get lower scores on intelligence tests.
- Researchers found that ¾ of children tested in Kimberly, Cape Town and Johannesburg had lead poisoning. One reason is that lead paint covers homes, toys and playground equipment across parts of the country.
- While the government has placed limits on how much lead can be added to paint, industry groups and experts say the government isn't enforcing these laws. Additionally, healthcare workers are missing lead poisoning cases.

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Lead poisoning is a condition linked to heart and kidney disorders, tiredness and memory loss.

It happens to people when they're exposed to lead, a metal found in certain paints, gun bullets, batteries and even in the garden soil of some South African neighbourhoods.

Children are harder hit than adults.

They're more likely to put flaking lead paint chips in their mouths or to eat soil.

Once in their bodies, lead can harm kids' developing brains.

Children who are exposed to lead often have lower IQ scores.

They also tend to be violent.

Lead poisoning is common in South Africa.

In the 2000s, researchers found that lead paint covered houses, toys and playground equipment like slides and swings.

$\frac{3}{4}$  of children tested in Kimberley, Cape Town and Johannesburg were found to have lead poisoning.

More recently, scientists revealed that people in fishing communities, mining towns and at gun ranges have widespread lead poisoning cases.

What is being done to cut cases of lead poisoning?

Experts worry not enough is done.

The government has placed strict limits on the amount of lead that can be added to paint. But industry experts say the laws aren't being enforced.

South Africa has no plans to remove or cover the existing lead paint on walls and playground equipment across the country.

Meanwhile, doctors are missing cases too.

Just 3 cases of lead poisoning were reported to the health department between 2017 and 2022.

*This story was produced by the [Bhekisisa Centre for Health Journalism](#). Sign up for the newsletter.*