

In humans exposure to lead can result in a wide range of biological effects depending on the level and duration of exposure. For the majority of people in the UK, however, dietary lead exposure is well below the provisional tolerable weekly intake recommended by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Health Organisation. High levels of exposure may result in toxic biochemical effects in humans which in turn cause problems in the synthesis of haemoglobin, effects on the kidneys, gastrointestinal tract, joints and reproductive system, and acute or chronic damage to the nervous system. Various effects occur over a broad range of doses, with the developing foetus and infant being more sensitive than the adult. At intermediate concentrations, however, there is persuasive evidence that lead can have small, subtle, subclinical effects, particularly on neuropsychological developments in children.