

ZAMFARA LEAD POISONING IN NIGERIA

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Lead is a soft metal that has known many applications over the years. It has been used widely since 5000 BC for application in metal products, cables and pipelines, but also in paint and pesticides. Lead is one out of four metals that have the most damaging effects on human health. It can enter the human body through food (65%), water (20%) and air (15%).

Lead can cause several unwanted effects, such as:

- Disruption of the biosynthesis of hemoglobin and anemia
- A rise in blood pressure
- Kidney damage
- Miscarriages and subtle abortions
- Disruption of nervous system
- Brain damage
- Declined fertility of men through sperm damage
- Diminished learning abilities of children
- Behavioral disruptions of children, such as aggression, impulsive behavior and hyperactivity.

Lead can enter a foetus through the placenta of the mother. Because of this it can cause serious damage to the nervous system and the brains of unborn children.

Lead is most dangerous to young children because their bodies and brains are still growing and developing, it can interfere with normal brain development and any level of lead exposure causes hard times, low concentration and poor coordination of the faculties without showing any external symptoms.

The incidence of Lead poisoning which started in 2010 in Zamfara State and claimed the lives of no fewer than 1,000 children and still counting is not about to end.

Cause of lead poisoning is illegal mining activities, which have occurred in Nigeria for over 2,000 years from basic clays to base metals and gold.

From 1970 till date illegal mining has continued to dominate mining in Nigeria as it accounts for 90% of solid minerals mining in the country.

The dangers of these illegal activities can never be over emphasised as the dangers are inherent in all human and animal life, but most worrisome is the fact that the effects are more on innocent children who are unable to protect themselves against the dangers of environmental poisoning as a result of illegal mining activities.