Abstract

The adverse effects of lead have been known for long since the metal affects practically all organs and systems of the human body. Recently, toxic effects have been reported in the cardiovascular and nervous systems at lead levels previously considered to be secure. The main lead storage site in the body is bone. The toxicologic significance of this fact has been clarified only recently. The present study analyzes the role of lead as an endogenous source of exposure, as a chronic exposure biomarker and as a target organ. Recent advances to measure bone lead through fluorescent X-Rays are discussed. Additionally, the importance of bone lead from a public health perspective in places with a chronic history of exposure such as Mexico City, and in some occupational environments is reviewed with particular attention placed on reproductive age women, who are potential lead sources for the fetus and lactating infant.

Keywords

lead/biological markers; occupational exposure; maternal exposure.