

NLM Traveling Exhibitions

PR Information



www.nlm.nih.gov/thisleadiskillingus

The National Library of Medicine produced *This Lead Is Killing Us: A History of Citizens Fighting Lead Poisoning in Their Communities*, guest curated by historian and educator Richard M. Mizelle, Jr, PhD (University of Houston).

The traveling banner exhibition and companion website explore the story of citizen action taken against an environmental danger. Lead exposure can cause neurological problems and sometimes even death; yet this metal has been pervasive in many aspects of American life for over a century. Historically, mining, battery manufacturing, smelting, and enameling industries included lead in their production processes, impacting factory workers and consumers. Manufacturers added lead to household paints and gasoline, endangering the health of families and polluting the air through exhaust fumes. To protect themselves against the dangers of lead poisoning, scientists, families, and individuals opposed industries, housing authorities, and elected officials.

[This Lead is Killing Us](#) includes an [education component](#) featuring a K-12 lesson plan that challenges students to examine historical cases of lead poisoning through primary and secondary sources. A [digital gallery](#) features a curated selection of fully digitized items from [NLM Digital Collections](#) that showcase numerous historical scientific studies and reports about the dangers of lead.

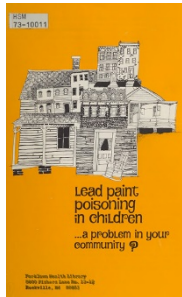
Please include this courtesy line with all public announcements about the project:

The National Library of Medicine produced this exhibition and companion website.

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Host venues for This Lead is Killing Us receive the PR images below. Please use them with their corresponding captions and credits noted below.



During the 1960s and 1970s, environmental movements led to increased governmental action, including publications that warned parents of lead in homes.

Lead Paint Poisoning in Children...a Problem in Your Community? U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1973

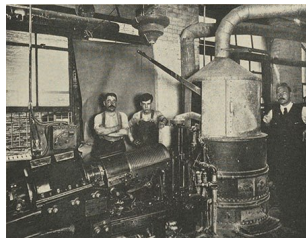
Courtesy National Library of Medicine



Physician and public health activist Alice Hamilton published a landmark investigative report about lead poisoning faced by industrial workers. Her background as a pathologist provided the expertise to critique what she termed the “dangerous trades.”

Alice Hamilton, ca. early 1900s

Courtesy National Library of Medicine



Printing was a dangerous trade. Workers manipulated individual lead “slugs,” or pieces of metal used for spacing, with their bare hands. They were exposed to lead dust and fumes created by the printing machines.

Workers operate a linotype machine, *Hygiene of the Printing Trades*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1917

Courtesy National Library of Medicine



The message “lead helps to guard your health” responded to growing public concern over lead’s toxicity in industrial trades and paint products, as described by industrial health pioneer Alice Hamilton.

Ad placed by the National Lead Company, *The National Geographic Magazine*, November 1923

Courtesy U.S. National Library of Medicine