



## Bengaluru is first city to get a 'lead map'

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June 22: It's called a 'lead' map of Bengaluru. It will be the first in the country to indicate places that have highly concentrated levels of the metal, lead. This poisonous substance causes various health problems, like damage to the nervous system and brain disorders. So the National Referral Centre for Lead Poisoning in India (NRCLPI) has started an initiative to create 'lead maps' and Bengaluru will be the first city to get its regional lead map.

"Studies at various levels are on at the moment and we are going to prepare a multi-dimensional 'lead map' of Bengaluru. It will be prepared after checking air samples, soil samples, water samples and even blood samples of people residing in areas which have a higher concentration of lead in the environment," said Dr Thuppil Venkatesh, project in-charge, Lead Map of India, NRCLPI. He said that so far they have found that people residing in areas like Electronic City, Peenya and Kalasipalya, have high levels of lead in their blood. "Such areas will be declared 'Lead Alert Zones' in the city," he said.

The permissible limit of lead in the blood is said to be below 5 micro grams per 100 ml of blood, but in the residents of these areas it was found to be above 20 micro grams per 100 ml of blood. "This explains the urgent need for 'lead maps' in the city, so that before buying or constructing houses people are aware of the lead content in the environment of that particular area," said Dr Venkatesh.

It is an ongoing study, with samples being collected from various parts of the city. "This is essential because lead poisoning is a serious problem with children especially vulnerable. It affects their IQ and also leads to cognitive developmental problems. In adults it could cause multi-organ ailments," said Dr Venkatesh. This map is expected to be complete by 2012.