

Years of chronic illness in composer Ludwig van Beethoven may have been caused by **lead** poisoning. Chemical analysis of 8 strands of his hair showed **lead** concentrations 100 times greater than the levels of **lead** found in people today. The high **lead** levels would have had an impact on his personality and may have contributed to his death. During his adult years, Beethoven suffered from bad digestion, chronic abdominal pain, irritability and depression and he consulted 20-30 doctors for his problems. His exposure most likely came as an adult, because his intellect was not impaired. The source of the **lead** remains unknown.