

Keep Your Children Safe

Children may be exposed to lead – a well-known health hazard. Toys that have been made in other countries and then imported into the U.S. or antique toys and collectibles passed down through generations put children at risk for such exposure. To reduce these risks, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) issues recalls of toys that could potentially expose children to lead.



Lead may be used in two aspects of toy manufacturing

Paint: Lead may be found in the paint on toys.



It was banned in house paint, on Products marketed to children, and in dishes or cookware in the United States in 1978; however, it is still widely used in other countries and

therefore can still be found on imported toys. It may also be found on older toys made in the United States before the ban.

Plastic: The use of lead in plastics has not been banned. It softens the plastic and makes it more flexible so that it can go back to its original shape. It may also be used in plastic toys to stabilize molecules from heat. When the plastic is exposed to substances such as sunlight, air and detergents, the chemical bond between the lead and plastics breaks down and forms a dust.



How your child may be exposed

Lead is invisible to the naked eye and has no smell. Children may be exposed to it from consumer products through *normal hand-to-mouth activity*, which is part of their normal development. They often place toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouth, exposing themselves to lead paint or dust.



How to test a toy for lead

The only two methods to accurately test a toy for lead is through a certified XRF Analyzer or by certified laboratory. Although do-it-yourself kits are available, they do not indicate how much lead is present and their reliability at detecting low

levels of lead has not been determined.



What to do if you are concerned about your child's exposure

If you have any reason to suspect that your child has been exposed to a toy containing lead, remove the toy immediately. Most children with elevated blood lead levels have no symptoms. The only way to tell is to have a blood lead test. Your health care provider can help you decide whether such a test is needed and can also recommend treatment if your child has been exposed.



Obtaining recall information

The CPSC asks that parents check for possible recalls of their children's toys and take the toys away immediately if they have been recalled. Photos and descriptions of recalled toys can be found at <http://www.cpsc.gov>, or call 800-638-2772.

Helpful Hints

1. Pay attention to toy recalls

Occasionally, a toy manufacturer will determine that imported toys were painted with paint containing lead. Usually the manufacturer will inform the public through the media.

2. If in doubt throw it out

Any toys or objects that are deteriorated and pose a possible lead hazard should be thrown away or stored out of reach from young children.

3. Put your quarters away

Toys found in gumball machines, such as metal and plastic jewelry often contain traces of lead. Likewise, stay away from "dollar stores," which are filled with cheaply made products.

4. Buy American-made toys

Look online and in specialty toy shops. Additionally, local craft fairs and farmer's markets often sell handmade toy products, such as wooden vehicles and cloth dolls. Shop for toys that are "fair-trade," whose regulations clearly restrict the use of toxic materials.

Other Helpful Hints

Keep it Clean

Wash your children's toys regularly, especially toys that the child puts in their mouth. Also, regularly cleaning your home will reduce dust and exposure.

Hand Washing

Wash your child's hands frequently, especially before eating and sleeping.

Healthy Diet

Serve children foods high in iron (such as eggs, cooked beans and red meats), calcium (such as cheese, yogurt or cooked greens), and vitamin C (such as citrus fruits, green peppers, or tomatoes). Adequate intake of these nutrients minimizes lead absorption in children's bodies.

FACTS ABOUT LEAD

What are the health effects of lead poisoning in children?

Lead interferes with the development and functioning of almost all body organs, particularly the kidneys, red blood cells, and central nervous system.

Lead poisoning is much more serious when children are exposed to lead. Since their bodies are not fully developed, lead poisoning can cause:

- **Brain, liver, and kidney damage**
- **Developmental delays**
- **Learning or behavior problems**
- **Loss of IQ**
- **Hearing loss**
- **Restlessness**

What are the symptoms of lead poisoning?

Most children with lead poisoning do not show any outward symptoms unless blood-lead levels become extremely high; consequently, many cases of children with lead poisoning go undiagnosed and untreated.

However, some symptoms of poisoning include:

- **Headaches**
- **Stomachaches**
- **Nausea**
- **Tiredness**
- **Irritability**

Because the symptoms of lead poisoning are similar to those of flu's or viruses, the only way to know if a child is poisoned is to have a doctor perform a simple blood **test**. For more information about the health effects of exposure to lead, visit our website at:

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/publichealth/Pages/LeadIndex.aspx>

Lead in children's toys is a hazard and an ongoing concern for parents. With a little knowledge and some resources, finding fun, lead-free toys shouldn't be a chore.



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From Toys That Contain Lead

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