

Lead Safe Homes:

Lead in food, spices, and traditional products

- Lead may be found in certain foods, cosmetics, and traditional medicines imported or purchased in other countries.
- Eating, breathing in, or wearing products with lead can expose you and your family to lead.



Lead poisoning is preventable! Protect yourself and your family. There is no safe level of lead.



Be aware of the sources of lead

- Products such as spices, cosmetics, and traditional medicines imported from other countries may have harmful levels of lead.
- You cannot tell if a product contains lead by looking at or tasting it. People selling these items may not know if the products contain lead.
- Check for product recalls and safety alerts for lead from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Examples of products that may contain lead:
 - Spices brought in from the countries of **Georgia, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Morocco** are known to have the highest lead concentrations.
 - **Ba-baw-san** is a Chinese herbal remedy that may contain lead. It is used to treat colic pain or to calm young children.
 - **Daw Tway**, a digestive aid used in Thailand and Myanmar, can contain high levels of lead.
 - **Greta and Azarcon** (also known as alarcon, coral, luiga, maria luisa, or rueda) are Hispanic traditional medicines taken for an upset stomach (empacho), constipation, diarrhea, and vomiting. They are also used on teething babies. Greta and Azarcon are both fine orange powders with lead content as high as 90%.
 - **Ghasard**, an Indian folk medicine, has also been found to contain lead. It is a brown powder used as a tonic.
 - **Kohl, kajal, al-Kahal, surma, tiro, tozali, and kwalli**, which are used as cosmetics, often contain high levels of lead and other metals.
 - **Sindoor**, which can be used as a food additive or cosmetic, may be up to 87% lead.
 - Some candies imported from Mexico with ingredients such as **chili powder and tamarind** may contain lead. Lead can get into the candy when drying, storing, and grinding the ingredients are done improperly. Ink from plastic or paper candy wrappers may also contain lead that can contaminate the imported candy.

Keep your family safe and prevent lead exposures

- Prevent children and pregnant women from using these products unless you are certain they do not contain lead.
- Purchasing spices from local stores may decrease your risk of lead exposure. Spices hand-carried in from other countries may have higher levels of lead than similar spices bought in U.S. stores.
- Lead is especially dangerous for children and pregnant women. Children's small, growing bodies absorb more lead for their size.

Test your blood lead level

- If you or your family commonly use these types of spices, food, cosmetics, or traditional medicines, contact your health care provider and ask for a simple blood lead level test. Most children and adults who are exposed to lead have no symptoms.
- A simple blood lead test is the best way to determine if you or your child has been exposed to lead. These tests are covered by Medicaid and most private health insurance.
- There is no safe blood lead level in children. However, a blood lead level above 3.5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL) indicates increased risk of health effects.

Resources

Idaho Environmental Health Program lead page - healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/health-wellness/environmental-health/lead

U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Food product recalls and safety alerts for lead - www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts

Consumer Products Safety Commission: Consumer product recalls for lead - www.saferproducts.gov/PublicSearch

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/sources/foods-cosmetics-medicines.htm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - www.epa.gov/lead/learn-about-lead

Contact

Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Environmental Health Program

healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/environmentalhealth

BCEH@dhw.idaho.gov

(800) 445-8647



Children exposed to lead may develop lower IQ, learning disabilities, stunted growth, kidney damage, and attention-related behaviors, such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).



Pregnant women exposed to lead may experience low birth-weight babies, premature births, miscarriage, and stillbirth.



Adults exposed to lead may develop difficulties with memory, attention, learning, hearing loss, infertility, and high blood pressure.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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