

**For Immediate Release**

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### **Lead for your holidays?**

With all of the recalls of toys, jewelry and other items due to high levels of lead, one has to wonder if the gifts they are giving or receiving are safe. The Washington Poison Center offers some facts on lead poisoning to give you, if not peace of mind, comfort in knowing lead is of little worry during the holidays.

Lead, which is invisible to the naked eye and has no smell, has always been in many of the items we see and use everyday. Advances in technology have allowed us to measure for lead like never before. “The toy recalls were based on a lead-detection gun that measures if lead is in an item, not if the lead can be absorbed into the body if the item was licked or eaten,” stated Dr. William Hurley, Washington Poison Center Medical Director. “Although lead should not be in toys or other items in a child’s environment, the risk is very low. Thus far, we have no known cases of poisoning from lead-containing toys.”

For most items containing lead, the lead is tightly bound in a form that is difficult to absorb. Even if the lead-containing paint from most items were licked or eaten everyday for years, very little lead would be absorbed into the body. Some products do release the lead in a way that can be absorbed. Items of concern include dust from paint during home renovation, imported candies, imported cosmetics, decorative pottery and ceramics made with lead glaze (usually imported), older painted furniture (including cribs) and some toys coated with lead paint or lead-based stains. Children can also get exposed to lead from traditional home health remedies such as azarcon and greta, which are used for upset stomach or indigestion in the Hispanic community.

There are some simple ways you can decrease the amount of lead in your child's environment;

- Keep your children away from peeling paint and paint dust. Prevent children from chewing painted surfaces.
- Wash your own and your child's hands frequently to clean off any dust or dirt that may contain lead.
- Wash your child's toys often, especially infant teething toys.
- Do not use decorative pottery or ceramic ware for food storage or service.
- Prepare and serve nutritious meals high in Vitamin C, iron and calcium to help prevent lead from being absorbed into the body.

If you are concerned an item in your home may contain lead, there are home lead test kits available at your local hardware store for around \$13. These kits will give you an idea of whether or not lead is on the surface of the product, meaning it may be able to be absorbed into the body. The Consumer Product Safety Commission warns that these tests are not completely reliable, but aside from testing by a qualified laboratory and trained personnel, there is no other way to assess the potential risk posed by a consumer product that may contain lead. A child that has been repeatedly exposed to an item that is believed to contain lead should be seen by a physician to test for the amount of lead in the blood.

“It's the dose that makes the poison,” Hurley reminds. “As with most poisons, it takes one very large exposure or many small repeated exposures before the amount of lead or any other poison gets to a dangerous level.” Please call the Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 with any questions or concerns you may have.

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The Washington Poison Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization, prevents harm from poisoning through expertise, collaboration and professional and public education. Reachable 24/7, the national poison hotline, **1-800-222-1222**, will connect you to specially-trained pharmacists, nurses and poison specialists. Poison help is always free and confidential. Services are available for people with hearing problems and for non-English speakers. [www.wapc.org](http://www.wapc.org)