

Toys and Lead

What is lead and why is it dangerous?

Lead is a metal found in the earth, and it is toxic to humans if ingested. For years, lead was used in paint, gasoline, plumbing and many other items. Lead is still found in some kinds of pottery and painted furniture. But the most common source is lead-based paint found in houses built before 1978. Lead has more recently been found in some children's toys, jewelry and charms. When children swallow lead from painted surfaces or items containing lead, they can become poisoned.

Which toys have been recalled?

On August 2, 2007, Fisher-Price® recalled approximately 967,000 toys, including *Sesame Street*®, *Dora the Explorer*®, and other licensed characters. In addition, on August 14, 2007, Mattel® recalled approximately 253,000 toy *Sarge*® cars. On June 13, 2007, RC2 Corporation® recalled approximately 1.5 million *Thomas and Friends*® wooden railway toys. There also have been a number of smaller recalls for a variety of children's products this past year.

For a complete list of lead-related toy recalls, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Web site at

www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/Recalls/. Other useful recall Web sites are the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Web site at www.cpsc.gov or the Federal Governments recall website at www.recalls.gov.

If my child has one of these toys, does he or she need a lead test?

The best way to find out if your child has been exposed to lead is with a blood lead test. Parents should discuss the need for a blood lead test with their health care provider. Testing may be appropriate, especially if the child frequently chews on toys, puts toys in his or her mouth, or has frequent hand-to-mouth activity.

What about testing my child's toys for lead?

Many home lead test kits are not reliable enough to give consistent results according to the CPSC. Testing should only be done by a licensed lead inspector or risk assessor utilizing an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyzer. Another method would be taking the toy to an accredited laboratory for testing. However, the toy may be destroyed during the laboratory testing process. Contact MDH for a list of certified lead firms or accredited laboratories that test for lead.

What should be done with toys that have been recalled?

Children should not be allowed to play with recalled toys. Until the toys can be returned or destroyed as directed, put the toys in a place where children cannot find them. Because each recall is different, MDH recommends that you check the recall notice to learn how to return the toy for a refund or replacement (see the previously mentioned Web sites).

If there is any doubt about whether or not an item contains lead, it would be safer to dispose of that item – “*When in doubt, throw it out.*”

Additional Questions?

For more information about lead, contact the MDH Lead Program at (651) 201-4620, visit our website at www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh or write us at the address below.

If you require this document in another format, such as large print, Braille, or cassette tape, call:
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