

## Keeping your Family Healthy

### Recommendations:

- Talk to your health care provider about the herbs or Ayurvedic medications you are taking.
- Show your health care provider any medicines you are taking including the labels.
- Think carefully about each herbal medicine and whether it is serving you.
- Understand the ingredients of any herbal medicines you take, and make certain you can trust that the product does not contain lead, arsenic or mercury.
- Be especially careful about any medications given to young children and pregnant women.
- Maintain balance through methods that work for you, such as eating a healthful diet, exercising, and maintaining relationships.

## Remember

These products are often produced without regulatory oversight and consumers have to decide whether to use them or not without complete safety information.

### If you have symptoms that concern you contact:

- The poison center (800-222-1222)
- A medical toxicologist
- Your health care provider

# Metal Toxicity

## From Ayurvedic Medications

What you should know about lead, mercury & arsenic that can be found in Ayurvedic medicine

**MDH** Minnesota  
Department of Health

## Lead & Healthy Homes Program

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Or visit our website at:

<http://www.health.state.mn.us/lead>

Brochure design was adapted from the Arizona Department of Health Services Healthy Homes Program

Funding for this project was provided by CDC Grant CDC-RFA-EH14-1408PPHF14

Metal Toxicity from Ayurvedic Medications – English  
Revised 08/2015  
Item # 55711

**MDH** Minnesota  
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# ● Ayurveda

## What is it ?

- Is a holistic system of medicine that has been practiced for thousands of years.
- Promotes balance among body, mind, spirit, and the environment.

People who practice Ayurveda often use herbal compounds (Ayurvedic medicines) to treat ailments and promote health.

## Heavy Metal Poisoning

Some Ayurvedic medicines and other traditional medicines may contain harmful heavy metals.

A recent study found that one out of every five Ayurvedic medications purchased online contained lead, mercury, or arsenic.

In recent years, several Minnesota children whose families are from India have had high levels of lead or mercury in their blood that were traced back to Ayurvedic medicine.



# ● Heavy Metal Poisoning

## Who is at risk ?

Heavy metals are most harmful to young children because their bodies and brains are still growing and developing. Pregnant women and their unborn children may also be at higher risk.

## What are the possible effects ?

- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Infertility
- Problems with learning & behavior
- Kidney & liver damage

Very high blood lead levels can cause serious brain damage, convulsions, coma and even death.

Low doses of these substances may not cause any outward signs but may be harming the body.

## How do I know if someone has been exposed ?

Blood tests are available for metals to see if you have been exposed.

# ● Heavy Metals in Ayurvedic Medications

## Why are heavy metals in Ayurvedic medications?

Some products contain heavy metals because of their effects on the body.

For example:

- Small amounts of lead may calm the stomach.
- Arsenic can be used to treat some types of cancer (but may also cause skin, lung and bladder cancer).
- Because mercury is toxic, it has been used to kill bacteria.

Some herbs are unintentionally grown in contaminated soil or processed with equipment that introduces metal into the product.

Even tiny amounts of lead, mercury, and arsenic can harm the body.

Claims that they can be “detoxified” are not supported by research.

