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DATE: February 10, 2021
TO: WIC Coordinators
FROM: State WIC Staff
SUBJECT: Heavy Metals in Infant Foods

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy, released an investigative report on heavy metals found in infant foods: [Baby Foods Are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury](#). After the information was released, NWA responded by acknowledging this concerning information and urges “FDA to take swift action to develop and release meaningful standards for toxic metals to protect the near and long-term health of our nation’s children.” Read the press release here: [Congressional Report Finds Toxins in Baby Food Products](#).

MN WIC addressed this information when the report was initially released in the fall of 2019. Due to the recent recirculation of this report, it is gaining media attention and you may get questions from participants. The following talking points remain consistent from previous recommendations:

Feeding approaches to address heavy metals in foods:

- Parents should serve a wide variety of fruits and vegetables that include carrots, sweet potatoes, and other choices.
- Iron fortified cereals are an important dietary component for infants beginning solids. Iron sources found in infant meats and iron fortified cereal are critical for brain development. There are many types of infant cereal available from WIC, especially if rice is a concern.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends giving no juice before 1 year and limiting quantities provided to children. For babies 6 months and older, provide only breastmilk or formula, and water to drink.
- Avoid higher risk foods with limited nutrition value such as snacks and puffs made from rice flour and teething biscuits.

Environmental steps families can take to reduce exposure to heavy metals:

- **Address lead hazards in the home.** Peeling or chipping paint from older homes is the most common source of lead exposure.
- **Check their water source.** Heavy metals can get into tap water or contaminate well water, and older pipes may contain lead. Encourage them to contact their local health department to have their water tested if this is a concern.
- **Don't smoke or vape.** Secondhand and thirdhand smoke from both regular and e-cigarettes can expose children to heavy metals.

HEAVY METALS IN INFANT FOODS

How do metals get into foods and the environment?

- Metals are naturally found where foods grow in the ground.
- Pollution can affect the water and soil used to grow food.
- Metals can also get into food during manufacturing and packaging.

Additional Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics Article: [Heavy Metals in Baby Food](#)

[USDA Infant Nutrition and Feeding - A Guide for Use in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](#) (See page 203)

Social Media Message:

In efforts to further share this information with consumers, MDH will post the following social media message and image within the week. Use this message or something similar for your social media posts:

MDH supports the recommendations published by the House Oversight and Reform Subcommittee to reduce heavy metals in baby foods. Breastfeed if possible, serve a variety of foods to reduce exposure from any one source, and switch up your grains. For more ways to reduce children's exposure to heavy metals visit

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Metals-in-Baby-Food.aspx>.



Reference – Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

[Baby Foods Are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury](https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2021-02-04%20ECP%20Baby%20Food%20Staff%20Report.pdf)
(<https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2021-02-04%20ECP%20Baby%20Food%20Staff%20Report.pdf>)

[Congressional Report Finds Toxins in Baby Food Products](https://www.nwica.org/blog/statement-on-the-congressional-report-on-baby-food#.YCQ2BOhKg2x)
(<https://www.nwica.org/blog/statement-on-the-congressional-report-on-baby-food#.YCQ2BOhKg2x>)

[Heavy Metals in Baby Food](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Metals-in-Baby-Food.aspx) (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Metals-in-Baby-Food.aspx>)

[USDA Infant Nutrition and Feeding - A Guide for Use in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children \(WIC\)](https://wicworks.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/document/Infant_Nutrition_and_Feeding_Guide.pdf)
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Heavy Metals in Baby Food (<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/feeding-nutrition/Pages/Metals-in-Baby-Food.aspx>)

Minnesota Department of Health - WIC Program,
85 E 7th Place, PO BOX 64882, ST PAUL MN 55164-0882;
651-201-4444, health.wic@state.mn.us, www.health.state.mn.us;
to obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4444