Lead Poisoning – Buyer Beware

Lead is a heavy metal and a toxin (poison) that can harm young children. Children 6 years old and under are most at risk as their bodies are still developing. Exposure to lead can cause learning and behavioral problems with the possibility of damage to the brain, kidneys, and other organs.

Before the risk to young children was known lead was used in many materials and products such as lead-based paints, lead solder used in plumbing, and leaded gasoline. Although U.S. laws now prevent lead from being used in many products, there are still lead hazards in and around many homes.

2007 was a banner year for products imported to the United States found to contain lead. Although the media reports focused on toys the reality is the number of products imported that possibly could contain lead is increasing. Everything from toys, jewelry, ceramics and school supplies to everyday household products are now under investigation for potential lead exposures.

This obvious health concern has prompted consumers to take precautions to protect themselves with the purchase of home lead testing kits. Two reputable agencies Consumer Reports and Consumer Product Safety Commission are not in agreement with their interpretation as to the credibility of home lead testing kits. Most of these lead testing kits can only detect lead at the surface or where “accessible”. Lead can be embedded below the surface.

To be safe the Upstate New York Poison Center recommends that you regularly check the Consumer Product Safety Commission recall list (a link is provided below). If you are concerned about other specific items in your home, especially if you have small children lead test kits might be a useful tool. If testing produces a positive result it might have lead. However, a negative result is no guarantee that the item is lead free.

Here are some important links for more information.

- Lead Program in New York State visit http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/
- For a list of recalled items visit http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpib/prerel/prerel.html
What should parents know about using cough and cold products?

Read all of the information in the “Drug Facts” box on the package label so that you know the active ingredients and the warnings.

Follow the directions in the “Drug Facts” box. Do not give a child medicine more often or in greater amounts than is stated on the package.

Too much medicine may lead to serious and life-threatening side effects, particularly in children aged 2 years and younger.

For liquid products, parents should use the specific measuring device (dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon) that is packaged with the product to deliver the recommended dose. A kitchen teaspoon or tablespoon is not an appropriate measuring device for giving medicines to children.

If a measuring device is not included with the product, parents should purchase one at the pharmacy. Make sure that the dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon has markings on it that match the dosing that is in the directions in the “Drug Facts” box on the package label, or is recommended by the child’s health care provider.

If you DO NOT UNDERSTAND the instructions on the product, or how to use the dosing device (dropper, dosing cup or dosing spoon), DO NOT USE the medicine. Consult your healthcare provider if you have questions or are confused.

Cough and cold medicines only treat the symptoms of the common cold such as runny nose, congestion, fever, aches, and irritability. They do not cure the common cold.

If a child’s condition worsens or does not improve, stop using the product and immediately take the child to a health care provider for evaluation.

A copy of the FDA’s August 15 Public Health Advisory may be obtained at:

http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/advisory/cough_cold.htm
Poison Prevention Tips for the Winter and Holiday Season

As the winter weather approaches and the holiday festivities begin it is important to remember that there is an increased risk for poisoning. These are some steps you can take to prevent poisoning.

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

CO is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless poisonous gas that comes from carbon containing burning fuels. To prevent CO poisoning:

• Have a Heating professional check and clean your furnace every year.
• Make sure the Heating professional checks for proper airflow and ventilation.
• Never use an oven or gas range for home heating, and do not bring propane grills indoors for cooking.
• Do not leave a fire burning in the fireplace or run a space heater while you are sleeping.
• Install CO detectors in your home and check the batteries at least every six months.

Plants and Decorations

Holiday decorations can be hazardous for children. Children may be drawn to eat certain colorful holiday plants, or to put other colorful decorative items in their mouths. Prevention tips include:

• Keep ornamental plants such as Holly, Mistletoe, and Jerusalem Cherry out of the reach of children. They can be poisonous if swallowed.
• Snow globes may develop bacteria in the water, or contain a more toxic ethylene glycol (antifreeze). Bubble lights contain Methylene Chloride and it toxic if ingested.
• Lead could be found in holiday lights and plastic decorations. To avoid lead exposure, do not allow children to put these items in their mouths, and wash their hands often.

Medication

The winter season is a time when more medications, such as cough remedies and antibiotics, are used in the home. Some simple steps you can take to prevent medication poisoning are:

• Keep medicine out of the reach of children.
• Do not mix medicines, exceed dosages, or use other people’s medicines.
• Read your medication labels and be aware of any warnings about possible side effects (e.g., drowsiness).
• Avoid alcohol consumption while taking prescription or over-the-counter medications.

For more information about poison prevention tips please visit our website at www.upstatepoison.org

If you suspect someone has been poisoned, call the Upstate New York Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Sources: Upstate New York Poison Center, Regional Poison Center for Massachusetts and Rhode Island and Jacksonville Poison Information Center.
the use of their products. Under DSHEA, Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act, once the product is marketed, FDA has the responsibility for showing that a dietary supplement is “unsafe,” before it can take action to restrict the product’s use or removal from the marketplace.

**Why do some supplements have wording (a disclaimer)?**

The manufacturer is responsible for ensuring the accuracy and truthfulness of these claims; they are not approved by FDA. For this reason, the law says that if a dietary supplement label includes such a claim, it must state in a “disclaimer” that FDA has not evaluated this claim. The disclaimer must also state that this product is not intended to “diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease,” because only a drug can legally make such a claim.

**How can I, my health care provider, or any informed individual report a problem or illness caused by a dietary supplement to FDA?**

If you think you have suffered a serious harmful effect or illness from a product FDA regulates, including dietary supplements, the first thing you should do is contact or see your healthcare provider immediately. Then, you and your health care provider are encouraged to report this problem to FDA.

**NOTE: The identity of the reporter and/or patient is kept confidential.**

For a general, not serious, complaint or concern about food products, including dietary supplements, you may contact the consumer complaint coordinator at the local FDA District Office nearest you. See the following Web address for the telephone number: http://www.fda.gov/opacom/backgrounders/complain.html.