Keeping Kids Safe from Toys Contaminated with Lead

I have heard that some toys are being recalled because they contain lead, is this true?

Yes, this is true. Toy manufacturers and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission have issued recalls for several types of children’s toys and other products because their surface paint contained levels of lead that were more than U.S. safety standards.

I have heard that there is a new “lead law”. What does this new law do?

The new lead law, called the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA). When CPSIA was signed into law in August 2008, it became unlawful to sell products that had been recalled due to lead contamination. New requirements of this law took effect in February 2009. These new requirements apply to the sale of new children’s’ products as well as the re-sale of these products. CPSIA makes it illegal to sell children’s products with more than 600 ppm total lead. The total lead limit will drop to 300 ppm in August 2009. The law requires:

1. *Manufacturers* and importers must certify that children’s products made after 2/10/2009 meet the requirements of the lead ban. But they do not have to test their products until February 2010.
2. *Major retailers* and dollar stores cannot sell toys with banned lead levels and must remove toys that exceed the lead levels.
3. *Thrift stores* and private online retailers cannot sell toys with banned lead levels.
4. *Crafters cannot* sell handmade toys with banned lead levels.
How do toys become contaminated with lead?

Lead may be found in the paint of either wooden or plastic toys. It was banned in house paint and other products in the United States in 1978. However, it is still widely used in other countries, and can still be found on toys from other countries. Lead can also be found on toys made in the United States before the ban.

How can my child be exposed to lead in toys?

Children may be exposed to lead as they often place toys, fingers, and other objects in their mouth, exposing themselves to lead paint or dust. Lead may cause a number of health problems such as behavioral problems, learning disabilities, seizures, and death. Children under 6 years old are at higher risk for exposure to lead because of their hand to mouth behavior. If caught early, these lead-related health problems can be limited by reducing the exposure and by medical treatment.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, a child with a blood level up to 10 - 20 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood may not exhibit any visible symptoms, but could still be at risk for lead poisoning and other health problems. A person with a blood lead level of more than 40 micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood may have symptoms such as abdominal pain, constipation, loss of appetite, agitation, lethargy and seizures.

Be aware that some items not meant to be toys, like jewelry, charms, and key chains may also contain lead. These items can lead to acute lead poisoning or even death if they are mouthed or swallowed.
What should I do if I think my child has been playing with toys that have been recalled or may be contaminated with lead?

If you think that your child has been exposed to a toy containing lead, take away the toy, immediately. Most children with elevated blood lead levels have no symptoms. The only way to tell if your child has been exposed to lead is to have a blood lead test. Your health care provider can help you decide whether a test is needed, and can recommend next steps, if your child has been exposed. 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.

Why is it important for my child to be tested?

If your health care provider recommends testing, it is important to get the test. If your child has an elevated blood lead level, you need to remove the source of lead and watch your child's health.

If my child does not have health insurance that will pay for a lead test, where can I get my child tested at little cost?

Please see the list of low-cost clinics across Colorado.

Can I test my child’s toys for lead?

Only a certified laboratory can truly test a toy for lead. Although do-it-yourself kits are available, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment does not currently recommend their use to test toys for lead. These kits were meant to detect high levels of lead in paint, and their ability to detect low levels of lead may be unreliable.

Today, the most common source of lead exposure in young children is deteriorating lead paint in homes, including paint
chips and dust from painted doors and windows. All homes built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint.

Home test kits certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency are still recommended to test for the presence of lead in paint in homes.

- Where can I find more information about toy recalls?
  
  The Consumer Product Safety Commission asks that parents check for possible recalls of their children’s toys and immediately take the toys away. Photos and descriptions of recalled toys can be found at the Consumer Product Safety Commission’s website, or by calling 1-800-638-2772.

- What I do 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, we recommend that you check the recall notice to learn how to return the toy for a refund or replacement.

- How can I learn more about heath effects related to lead?
  
  You can get more information from the Frequently Asked Questions about lead from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

- How can I select safer toys for my kids?
  
  Please see the following tips for buying toys as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
For more information about lead in toys, please contact Shannon Rossiter, MPH at 303-692-2617, or toll free at 1 (888) 569-1831, extension 2617.

References:


Low cost clinics across Colorado

DENVER AND SURROUNDING AREAS

Clinica Campesina Family Health Services
Phone: (303) 665-2962
Website: www.clinicacampesina.org
Service Area: Adams and Boulder counties

Clinica Tepeyac
Address: 3617 Kalamath Street, Denver, CO
Phone: 303.458.5302
Website: www.clinicatepeyac.org
Service Area: Varies. Most patients are from Aurora and Thornton.

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless
Phone: (303) 293-2217
Website: www.coloradocoalition.org
Service Area: Denver County

Denver Health Family Health Centers
Phone: (303) 436-6000
Website: www.denverhealth.org
Service Area: City and County of Denver

Doctors Care
Address: 191 E. Orchard Road, Suite 120 NE, Littleton, CO
Phone: 303.730.1313
Website: www.drscare.org
Service Area: Restricted to Douglas, Arapahoe and Elbert Counties only.

Inner City Health Center
Address: 3405 Downing Street, Denver, CO
Phone: 303.296.1767
Service Area: Primarily City of Denver, Denver County and metro area

Metro Community Provider Network
(303) 761-4825 • www.mcpn.org
Service Area: Adams, Arapahoe, and Jefferson counties

Salud Family Health Centers
Phone: (303) 892-6401 / (800) 388-4325
Website: www.saludclinic.org
Service Area: Adams, Boulder, Larimer, Logan, Morgan and Weld counties

BOULDER

Clinica Campesina Family Health Services
Phone: (303) 665-2962
Website: www.clinicacampesina.org
Service Area: Adams and Boulder counties
People’s Clinic
Phone: (303) 449-6050
Website: www.peoplesclinic.org
Service Area: Boulder County

Salud Family Health Centers
Phone: (303) 892-6401 / (800) 388-4325
Website: www.saludclinic.org
Service Area: Adams, Boulder, Larimer, Logan, Morgan and Weld counties

NORTHERN COLORADO
Salud Family Health Centers
Phone: (303) 892-6401 / (800) 388-4325
Website: www.saludclinic.org
Service Area: Adams, Boulder, Larimer, Logan, Morgan and Weld counties

Sunrise Community Health Center
Phone: (970) 353-9403
Service Area: Weld and Larimer counties

COLO. SPRINGS/PUEBLO AREA
Peak Vista Community Health Centers
Phone: (719) 632-5700
Website: www.peakvista.org
Service Area: El Paso, Teller and Park counties

Pueblo Community Health Center
Phone: (719) 543-8711
Website: www.pueblochc.org
Service Area: Pueblo County

SOUTHWEST COLORADO
Dove Creek Community Health Clinic
Phone: (970) 677-2291
Service Area: Dolores, Montezuma, and San Miguel counties

Uncompahgre Medical Center
Phone: (970) 327-4233
Website: www.umclinic.org
Service Area: San Miguel County

EASTERN PLAINS
Plains Medical Center
Phone: (719) 775-2367
Website: www.plainsmedicalcenter.org
Service Area: Adams, Arapahoe, Elbert, Kit Carson and Lincoln counties
High Plains Community Health Center
(719) 336-0261 • www.highplainschc.net
Service Area: Prowers County

SAN LUIS VALLEY
Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.
Phone: (719) 589-5161
Website: www.vwhs.org
Service Area: Alamosa, Bent, Conejos, Costilla, Crowley, Fremont, La Plata, Mineral, Montezuma, Otero, Rio Grande and Saguache counties

MOUNTAIN
Mountain Family Health Centers
Phone: (303) 258-3206
Website: www.mountainfamily.org
Service Area: Gilpin, Boulder, Garfield, Pitkin, and Eagle counties