

Toys: Get the Lead Out!

Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support—January 2011



Children can be exposed to lead in a variety of ways, most commonly through lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust, but also through plastic and metals. Because of these dangers, children can also be exposed to lead through their toys.

Lead can be found in the paint, plastic, and metal of some toys. While the U.S. has imposed limits on the amount of lead in products designed specifically for children, other countries have not passed similar legislation. For this reason, imported toys are more likely to contain higher, measurable amounts of lead. However, this does not mean that all toys made in the U.S. are completely safe, as some toys recently manufactured in this country have also been found to contain high levels of lead.

Unfortunately, the use of lead in plastic has not been banned and plastics are often used in toy manufacturing. When these toys are exposed to elements like sunlight or air, the chemical bonds can break down and form lead dust. Children then become exposed to lead by breathing in this dust.

Children are most commonly exposed to lead through hand-to-mouth activity, a normal part of child development. When children place lead contaminated toys or their hands in their mouth, they are being directly exposed to paint, dust, and/or metal, all of which can contain lead or other harmful chemicals.



All photos courtesy of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Retrieved on 01/07/11 from <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prereel/category/toy.html>.

What toys contain lead?

Lead has been found in all types of toys. Some toys also contain metal pieces which may contain lead and can be very dangerous if handled by a child. In 2006, a child in Minneapolis died of lead poisoning after swallowing a metal charm which contained extremely high levels of lead.



Toy Testing

You cannot tell if a toy contains lead just by looking at it. The only way to be sure that toys do not contain lead is to have them tested. While do-it-yourself lead testing kits are available, the results are not always completely accurate. The best way to know if your child's toys contain lead is to take them to a toy testing event. For information on upcoming testing events, please contact the Minneapolis Department of Health and Family Support at 612-673-2301.

For More Information

There are organizations that help monitor the safety of toys:

- The **Consumer Product Safety Commission** offers information on toy recalls. For the latest, up-to-date information on toy recalls, please visit <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/prerel/prerel.html> or call 1-800-638-2772.
- **HealthyToys.org** (<http://press.healthytoys.org/index.php>) provides information on toy safety and a rating system for toys based on the levels of lead as well as other harmful chemicals they may contain.

