Keeping your Family Healthy

Buying safe spices

Although many spices can contain lead, turmeric is the most commonly contaminated spice. Make sure your turmeric is **bright yellow,** not orange or red.

Lead contaminated spices often go undetected because it is impossible to inspect every item imported into the country. Consider purchasing non-imported spices because domestic products have higher safety standards and are more closely inspected than imports.

Proper Nutrition

Lead poisoning can be prevented, reduced and eliminated with proper nutrition. Serve your family foods that are high in:

- Iron (eggs, lentils, dal, spinach and red meat)
- Vitamin C (citrus, tomatoes, green peppers)
- Calcium (milk, yogurt, green vegetables)

Getting a lead test

Nearly everyone with lead poisoning usually looks and feels healthy, but they are still at risk for life-long consequences. The only way to detect lead poisoning is by having a simple blood test. Ask your doctor for a blood lead test for you and your family.

Remember:

- ✓ Make sure your turmeric is **bright yellow,** not orange or red
- ✓ Consider buying non-imported spices
- ✓ Feed children foods high in calcium and iron to help their bodies absorb less lead
- ✓ Some imported cosmetics and Sindoor can contain lead
- ✓ The only way to detect lead poisoning is by having a simple blood test
- ✓ Children and adults who are lead poisoned usually look and feel healthy, but may experience life-long consequences
- ✓ Ask your doctor for a blood lead test for you and your child

Please help us keep Arizona Lead Free

Arizona Department of Health Services

Healthy Homes Program

For more information please call us at:
Main Line: (602) 364-3118
Toll Free: (800) 367-6412
Fax: (602) 364-3146
E-mail: HealthyHomes@azdhs.gov

6-DEH-071 (REV. 5/12)

LEAD POISONING

From Imported Asian Spices

Finding Safe Spices
Understanding the Problem
Keeping Your Family Healthy

Arizona Department of Health Services

Lead Poisoning

What is it?

Lead poisoning is a condition caused by swallowing or breathing lead. Even a small amount of lead can harm children's intelligence, hearing, and growth. Very high blood lead levels can cause serious brain damage, convulsions, coma and even death.

Who is at risk?

Lead is most harmful to young children because their bodies absorb lead easily and their brains are still developing. Pregnant women and their unborn children are also at higher risk because a pregnant woman's body absorbs more lead, which can be passed along to her baby.

How do I know if someone has it?

People with lead poisoning usually look and feel healthy and show no signs of illness, but they still need treatment. The only way to detect lead poisoning is by asking your doctor to perform a simple blood test.

Lead in Imported Asian Spices

How does lead get in spices?

Spices become contaminated with lead when they are combined with lead oxide, which is an orange or red powder that looks similar to many spices. Vendors are paid by the weight of their products, so adding lead powder to their spices makes them heavier and earns the vendor more money.

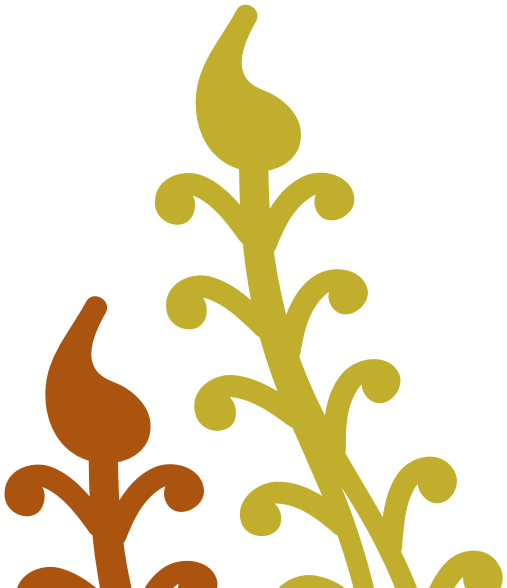
Are some spices more risky?

The most frequently contaminated spice is turmeric; however, high lead levels have been found in many kinds of spices. Since turmeric is found in many spice blends, like sambar or curry powders, high lead levels have been found in numerous spice blends.

Where are contaminated spices sold?

Most contaminated spices come from three main sources:

- Asian import grocery stores
- Purchased abroad and brought into the country by travelers
- Sent to the U.S. by family members living abroad



Cultural Products

Beauty Products

Some imported beauty products have been found to contain up to 83% lead. Women and children can become sick if they accidentally swallowed small amounts of these products, including:

- Sindoor
- Kohl
- Kajal
- Surma

Ayurvedic Remedies

Ayurvedic medicine is a traditional form of healing practiced throughout South East Asia. Most Ayurvedic treatment focuses on food and daily hygiene practices and carries no risk of lead poisoning, but some Ayurvedic tablets, powders and pills have been found to contain very high levels of lead.

To practice safe Ayurvedic medicine, make sure you:

- Ask your Ayurvedic doctor how they find high quality medicine
- Consider buying Ayurvedic medicine produced in the U.S.
- Check the label of your medicine to find a safety label by either a state or federal agency