

TOXIC TREATS

U.S. health officials have detected dangerous levels of lead in various brands of candy—most of them made in Mexico.



Records show that one in four candy and wrapper samples have come up high in lead since 1993. Unfortunately, much of this information about tainted candy has been kept from parents and public health workers.

AVOIDING LEAD

Tainted candy is cited as a potential source of lead poisoning in Orange County nearly as often as paint, but there are numerous ways children can be exposed to lead.

IN CANDY

In wrappers

Candy wrappers are printed with inks that contain lead. The lead is hazardous because it can leach into candy, or children can lick or eat the wrappers.

In chili

Chili often is not cleaned before it is milled, so dirt, which has lead, is thrown into the mix.

In glaze

Candy is sometimes packaged in small clay pots. To give these pots a shiny look, they are covered with a glaze called greta, which contains lead. Lead leaches into the candy.

In tamarind

Tamarind is sticky, and lead from pesticides, fertilizers or dirt can attach to it.

OTHER SOURCES

Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust: are still the top sources of lead poisoning.

Hobbies: making stained-glass windows.

Work: recycling or making automobile batteries.

Drinking water: lead pipes, solder, brass fixtures and valves can all leach lead.

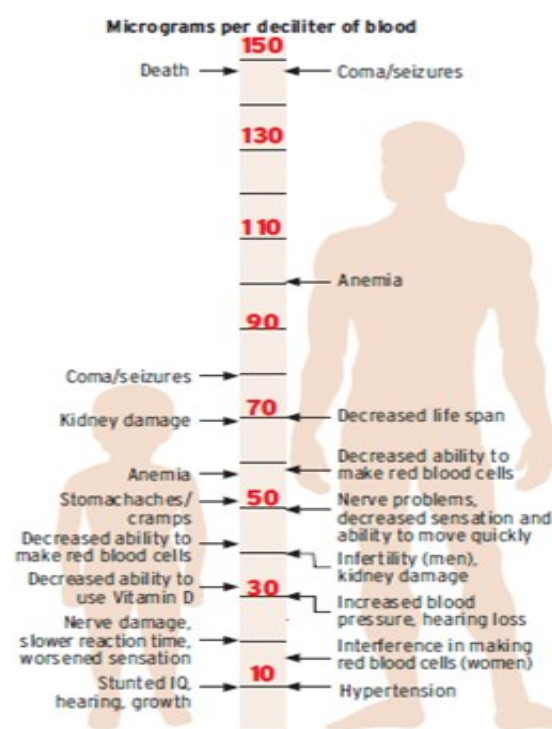
Home health remedies: azarcon and greta, which are used for upset stomach or indigestion; pay-loo-ah, which is used for rash or fever.

Other possible sources: ceramic pottery from other countries, dinner plates, cribs painted with lead-based paint, imported silver jewelry, bicycle handle covers, children's shoes, crayons.

SOURCE: Dept of Health Services, The Register

HOW LEAD AFFECTS YOU

Studies show that long-term exposure to lead can affect a child's developing nervous system. Health effects of different blood-lead levels in a child compared to an adult:



SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR:

Contact your doctor if you notice these symptoms or believe your child is at risk.

- Decreased appetite
- Fatigue
- Irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tremors
- Headaches
- Abdominal pain
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Weight loss

SOURCE: Register research
Graphic by Molly Zisk, The Register