



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
Thomas Farley, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

2011 Health Advisory #7 Lead Poisoning Associated With Certain Ayurvedic Medicines

- Two recent NYC adult lead poisoning cases have been associated with the use of the following imported Ayurvedic medicines: *Pregnita*, *Vasant Kusumakar Ras* with Gold & Pearl, and *Mahashakti Rasayan*.
- Ask patients about their use of prescription and non-prescription medicine products and advise patients to stop using products that may contain lead or other heavy metals.
- Obtain a blood lead level (BLL) on any patient who reports using Ayurvedic, herbal, traditional remedies or other alternative medicines. Consider testing for other heavy metals in consultation with an expert in heavy metal poisoning or the NYC Poison Control Center (PCC).
- Report all known or suspected poisonings by calling the PCC 24 hours a day/7 days a week at (212) POISONS (764-7667).

Please distribute to all clinical staff in Complementary or Alternative Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Family Medicine, Pediatrics, Gastroenterology, Gynecology & Obstetrics, Internal Medicine, Occupational and Environmental Health, and Primary Care.

May 25, 2011

Dear Colleagues:

The NYC Health Department continues to identify imported medicine products that contain lead, mercury, or other heavy metals. Two recent NYC cases of adult lead poisonings were associated with the use of certain Ayurvedic medicine products manufactured and purchased in India.

Case 1: In January 2011, DOHMH received a report of a 30-year old pregnant NYC resident with a BLL of 64 µg/dL. The case reported using an Ayurvedic prenatal supplement called *Pregnita* manufactured by Ajmera Pharmaceuticals. A physician in India prescribed the product for the treatment of pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting. The case ingested one to two pills daily for about four months. A sample was tested and found to contain 12,000 ppm lead. Approximately nine weeks after receiving chelation therapy, the case had a BLL of 21 µg/dL. The newborn had a BLL of 23 µg/dL.

Case 2: In March 2011, DOHMH received a report of a 40-year old male NYC resident with a BLL of 33 µg/dL which subsequently increased to 55 µg/dL. The case reported use of two Ayurvedic medicines for diabetes and weakness. Case ingested one pill of each product daily for about five months. Testing found that *Vasant Kusumakar Ras* with Gold & Pearl (manufactured by Dabur) contained 29 ppm lead and 31,000 ppm mercury, and *Mahashakti Rasayan* (manufactured by Vyas Pharmaceuticals) contained 9,400 ppm lead, 70,000 ppm mercury and 1,700 ppm arsenic. The case's BLL was 9 µg/dL after receiving chelation therapy.

DOHMH reminds health care providers that the use of traditional, complementary, alternative, and herbal remedies or medicines is common. These products may be manufactured or home-made, and can be purchased in NYC or abroad. If patients report using imported medicine products, consider the possibility that these products may contain high levels of heavy metals. For additional information, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/lead/lead-herbalmed.shtml>.

Sincerely,

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