



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Commissioner

2016 Health Advisory #: 6
Elevated Levels of Lead and Mercury in “Emperor’s Tea Pill”

- A Chinese supplement called *Emperor’s Tea Pill* recently purchased over-the-counter in New York City was found to have elevated levels of lead and mercury as high as 200 times the permissible limit.
- Providers should ask patients about their use of prescription as well as non-prescription imported health remedies or supplements.
- For patients who report using such products, providers should consider testing for lead and other heavy metals in consultation with an expert in heavy metal poisoning or the NYC Poison Control Center.

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.

March 17, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) reminds health care providers that some imported health remedies can contain high levels of heavy metals. DOHMH continues to identify lead poisoning cases associated with use of imported dietary supplements that may be available by prescription or over-the-counter.



In January 2016, DOHMH identified elevated levels of lead and/or mercury in a dietary herbal supplement called *Emperor’s Tea Pill* purchased over-the-counter in NYC. According to the product packaging, this supplement, manufactured in China by Lanzhou Traditional Herbs, could be used to “help maintain body’s natural balance.” The levels of heavy metals found in *Emperor’s Tea Pill* ranged from being slightly elevated with up to 3.7 parts per million (ppm) lead, which is approximately two times the permissible limit for lead for certain food additives, to 200 ppm mercury, which is 200 times the permissible limit for mercury. Further, product labeling recommends dosage of

24 pills (3.84 grams) of the product daily. Individuals who regularly use products found to contain high levels of heavy metals are at an increased risk for adverse health effects. Exposure to lead and other heavy metals can damage the brain, kidneys, and nervous and reproductive systems. These findings underscore the importance of risk assessment for lead exposure and blood lead testing for at-risk populations.

Resources for health care providers regarding “Lead Poisoning” and “Mercury Poisoning” are available at <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/lead-hcp-factsht.pdf> and <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/mercury-hcp-factsht.pdf>, respectively. For additional information, please visit nyc.gov/hazardousproducts.

Sincerely,

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