



2012 Health Advisory #: 37

Lead Poisonings in Children Associated With Some Ayurvedic Medications from India

- Two recent NYC childhood lead poisoning cases have been associated with the use of remedies and Ayurvedic medications made or purchased in India.
- Providers should ask patients about their use of Ayurvedic, herbal, traditional or other alternative remedies or supplements, as well as prescription and non-prescription medications.
- Providers should consider blood lead testing for patients who report using such products.

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

December 12, 2012

Dear Colleagues:

DOHMH recently identified two cases of childhood lead poisonings associated with the use of Ayurvedic medications and an unlabeled powder purchased in India.

Case 1: In July 2012, DOHMH received a report of a 4-year old child with pervasive developmental delays and a blood lead level (BLL) of 16 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. The family obtained from India an Ayurvedic medication called *Praval Pishti* which was tested and found to contain 17,000 ppm lead. The medication was prescribed by an Ayurvedic practitioner in India to improve brain development. The child ingested a teaspoon of the powder approximately once a week for about 6 months. Approximately three months after discontinuing the medication, the child had a BLL of 6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

Case 2: In September 2012, DOHMH received a report of a 2-year old child with a BLL of 47 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. The family reported using three products purchased in India 10 months ago. An Ayurvedic practitioner had prescribed half a pill twice a day as needed of the first two medications to improve immune function and half a teaspoon twice a day as needed of the unlabeled powder to prevent asthma exacerbations. The child had used the products intermittently but had been taking all three products for the two weeks prior to BLL testing. *Swarna Malini Vasant*, manufactured by Amrita Drugs in India, contained 31,000 ppm lead, 1,300 ppm arsenic and 32,000 ppm mercury. *Laxmi Vilas Ras (Nardiya)*, manufactured by Dabur in India, was found to contain 59,000 ppm mercury. The unlabeled powder contained 8,300 ppm mercury. Approximately two months after discontinuing the products, the child had a BLL of 29 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

DOHMH continues to identify health supplements and remedies made or purchased abroad that contain lead, mercury, or other heavy metals. These findings along with six recent cases of lead poisoning in NYC pregnant women also associated with the use of Ayurvedic medications underscore the importance of risk assessment for lead exposure and blood lead testing for at-risk populations.¹ DOHMH reminds health care providers that the use of traditional, complementary, alternative, and herbal remedies or

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Lead poisoning in pregnant women who used Ayurvedic medications from India--New York City, 2011-2012. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. 2012 Aug 24;61(33):641-6. PubMed PMID: 22914225.

medications is common. Products may be manufactured or home-made, and can be purchased in NYC or abroad.

Health care providers should 1) be aware that users might not readily disclose use of such products; 2) ask patients about their use of prescription and non-prescription medications and supplements, including Ayurvedic and other traditional remedies; 3) advise patients to stop using suspect products; 4) consider testing patients for exposure to lead or other heavy metals if use is reported; and 5) test all children at ages 1 and 2, and older children and pregnant women assessed to be at risk for lead exposure. For additional information, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/lead/lead-herbalmed.shtml>.

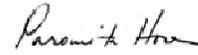
Sincerely,



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