Calabash Chalk Containing Lead and Arsenic

This fact sheet provides information about Calabash Chalk, a remedy, found to contain lead and arsenic.

What is Calabash Chalk?
Calabash Chalk is a West African remedy used to treat morning sickness during pregnancy. It is also known as Calabash Clay, Nzu, Poto, Calabar Stone, Ndom, Mabele, Argile or La Craie. It may be sold as large pellets or in bulk and can resemble balls of clay or mud. It may be packaged in a clear plastic bag with or without labeling. This product has been found to contain lead and arsenic.

How can lead affect my health?
Lead is a toxic metal, of particular concern for children and pregnant women. Lead poisoning can cause problems in pregnancy and learning and behavior problems in young children. Long-term effects of lead can include nervous system disorders and brain damage.

How can arsenic affect my health?
Arsenic is also a poisonous metal. People with long term exposures to arsenic may have an increased risk for cancer, skin lesions, eye irritation, and nervous system effects.

What should I do if I have used this product?
- Immediately stop using these products.
- Call your doctor to request a blood-lead test.
- Keep products away from children.
- If you suspect you may have been poisoned, call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS (764-7667) or 212-VENENOS (836-3667) for Spanish speakers.

How can I get more information?
Call 311 for more information or to report locations where these products are sold.