



***Some Progress, But Not Enough:  
Getting Lead out of Children's Products***



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# Introduction

In 2008, a new federal law for the first time set comprehensive limits on the amount of lead in toys and other children's products.

In collaboration with the California Attorney General the Center for Environmental Health has spent the last six weeks monitoring compliance with the new law. This report describes our findings so far. While most products for sale today comply with the new law, we found some that don't. Even a few is too many!

Lead is a stunningly toxic metal. A long list of problems has been linked to lead exposure: lowered intelligence, behavior problems, cancer, strokes, high blood pressure, kidney problems, anemia, cavities, and delayed puberty.

While exposure to lead paint in old houses remains the most significant source of children's lead exposure, about 30 percent of children with high blood lead levels are exposed to other sources of lead, including toys and other children's products.

# New Limits for Lead in Children's Products

A federal law passed in 2008, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, set comprehensive limits on the amount of lead in products designed for use by children 12 years old and under.

As of February 2009, any children's product was classified as a banned hazardous product if a component of the product contained over 600 parts per million lead.

In August 2009 the lead standard for children's products was reduced to 300 parts per million. In 2011 the standard is scheduled to go down to 100 parts per million.

# What We Did

In October and November 2009 we purchased about 250 children's products from major retailers in the Bay Area and San Diego.

After the products were purchased we screened them for lead content using an x-ray fluorescence analyzer. We sent components that our screening identified as violations of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act to a commercial lab certified by the Consumer Product Safety Commission for verification following Consumer Product Safety Commission procedures.

We provided information about all of the violations to the California attorney general for enforcement action.

# What We Found

We found lead content that exceeded federal standards in seven products.

 A clear plastic blister pack containing a Disney Tinkerbell necklace. The packaging is green and yellow, featuring images of Tinkerbell and other fairies. Text on the packaging includes "Silvermist Water Lily Necklace", "Tiny Tink & Friends", "TinkerBell", and a warning: "WARNING: CHOKING HAZARD—Small parts. Not for Children under 3 years." There is also a barcode and a CE mark.	<p>Walgreens</p> <p>Disney Tinkerbell Water Lily necklace</p> <p>Connector on pixie dust charm contains 22,000 parts per million lead</p>
 A pink fabric accessory kit for a Barbie bike. The kit is laid out on a white surface, showing a pink and white striped ball, a pink and white striped bag, and a pink and white striped bag. The kit is decorated with pink stars and the word "Flair" is visible on one of the items.	<p>Tuesday Morning</p> <p>Barbie Bike Flair Accessory Kit</p> <p>Pink star fabric contains 6196 parts per million lead</p>
 A colorful activity tote bag featuring the character Dora the Explorer. The tote is primarily orange with purple and yellow accents. It has a large illustration of Dora on the front and a handle on top.	<p>TJ Maxx</p> <p>Dora the Explorer Activity Tote</p> <p>Orange fabric on back of tote contains 2348 parts per million lead</p>



Sears

TKS girl's sandals

Orange insole contains 3957 parts per million lead



Wal-Mart

kids poncho

Yellow fabric contains 677 parts per million lead



Wal-Mart

Faded Glory girl's shoes

Sole contains 1331 parts per million lead



Target

Cherokee boys belt

Surface of belt contains 4270 parts per million lead

# Not Good for Children

Lead has a profound ability to damage children's intellectual and behavioral development. Children who have been exposed to higher levels of lead score lower on IQ tests than children with less exposure. Children with higher exposures are also more impulsive and have shorter attention spans.

Recent research has documented that lead exposure causes significant problems for children as they grow and develop:

- Scientists at Duke University found that increased blood lead levels in toddlers (1 to 2 years old) were linked with lower test scores in fourth grade.
- A 2007 study led by a scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health found that lead exposure in children ages 5 to 10 was linked with lower scores on IQ tests, lower scores on standardized reading and math achievement tests, decreased attention, and memory problems.
- Recent research looked at children and teens ages 4 to 15 who participated in a national monitoring program at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The study showed that lead exposure may be responsible for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in almost 300,000 children.

University of Cincinnati researchers found that arrest rates of young adults (both for violent crimes and all arrests) were linked to the blood lead levels of these adults when they were children. Higher childhood lead exposure was associated with higher arrest rates.

# What You Can Do

If you own any of the lead-containing items identified in this report we recommend that you dispose of them (ask your local waste management agency for the proper procedure) or keep them out of reach of children.

If you see these products at a store where you shop, don't purchase them and ask the store manager to make sure that all of the products comply with federal law.

Since most of the non-compliant products we identified were made from vinyl or other soft plastics, we also recommend that you avoid buying toys or other products with soft plastic components for children.

If you're concerned about lead problems in a product that you own, CEH can test it for you. Bring it to our office between 12 and 6 Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

# References

## Introduction

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## New Limits for Lead in Children's Products

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## Not Good For Kids

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