

Dec. 22, 2008

# Take care when shopping for toys this season

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It's better to give than to receive, but when buying toys this holiday season, gift givers should be especially cautious. Lead paint can be present in toys and can be found elsewhere in the home.

More than 20 million toys, mostly produced in China, were pulled off shelves in 2007 in more than 60 individual recalls — double the number of alerts the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued in 2006. Toys found to have more than 0.06 percent lead are subject to a recall.

"It's a good time to resist impulse buying," said Kathy Colson, Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department public health nurse. "Prevention is your best key."

A check to the CPSC's Recalls and Product Safety News shows that nearly all of the items recalled for lead paint this month involve children's toys. For a well-informed Christmas shopping spree, Colson recommends checking the CPSC's Recalls and Product Safety News (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/prerel/prerel.html>).

And to stay on top of the less-publicized recalls, subscribe to the CPSC's recall notification list (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsclist.aspx>), which sends out regular e-mail alerts.

Lead-based paint is hazardous if it is peeling, chipping, chalking or cracking. Even lead-based surfaces that don't appear to be damaged, such as a window sill, can be a danger if children chew on them or if the surface is exposed to a lot of wear and tear.

"If (a toy) has lead in it and children chewing on it a lot," Colson said, "or they're carrying it around in their hands and mouth a lot, then they have that potential of absorbing lead into their system."

Long-term lead exposure can cause learning, hearing and behavioral problems and can harm a child's brain, kidneys and other organs. Oftentimes, children do not look or act sick if they have been exposed. And because children with empty

stomachs absorb more lead than children with full stomachs, Colson recommends providing your child with four to six small meals a day with foods high in iron, calcium and Vitamin C.

Here are some other tips:

- Routinely wash all toys, pacifiers and other things your child may put in his or her mouth. Be aware of what he or she may be chewing on.
- Use detergent to wet mop floors, window sills, furniture or other surfaces that may contain lead dust. (This is especially the case for homes built before 1978).
- If your home was constructed before 1978, have your home tested before remodeling. Never sand blast paint.
- Some pottery and china from other countries may contain traces of lead. Use on lead-safe utensils and cookware.
- Use only cold water from the cold water tap for cooking or making baby formula. Run water for about one minute or until the temperature changes.
- Have your child tested for lead with a blood test during their regular visit to the pediatrician. Children should be tested at 12 months and again at 24 months. High-risk children should be tested every 6 months until 2 years and then each year until age 6.

The Health Department provides lead testing for children up to age 6 and for pregnant women. No appointment is required.

Indoor lead complaints may be investigated by the Health Department for the following scenarios:

- An elevated blood level (EBL) has been confirmed in a child age 6 or younger.
- A request has been made by a child care provider.
- A request has been made by a physician.

For more information on lead, visit <http://www.kdheks.gov/lead/>, [www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/](http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/) or call the Health Department (785) 843-3060.