



Lead in Imported Ceramics

Why is lead dangerous?

Any person can become lead poisoned, but children younger than 6 years old and pregnant women are at a higher risk. Lead is a poison that can harm the brain, kidneys, and other organs, especially in children. Even a small amount of lead in the child's body can have an impact on their development, making it hard for them to learn, pay attention, and behave.

Most children who have lead poisoning do not look or act obviously sick. The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to have your child get a blood test for lead. At risk children should be tested at 1 and 2 years old for lead poisoning. Also, children should be tested if they are between the ages of 1 and 6 years and have not been tested for lead before.

Who's at risk?

Children under 6 years old and fetuses are at greatest risk of harmful health effects from lead poisoning.

Children who live or spend significant amount of time in pre-1978 housing or buildings with paint in poor condition or undergoing renovation may be exposed. Also, children in publicly supported programs such as Medi-Cal, CHDP and Women, Infant and Children (WIC) are at greater risk.

Children exposed to lead contaminated dust or soil.

A pregnant woman can pass lead to her unborn child. The baby can be born too small or too early. If a pregnant woman's lead level is very high, there is a higher chance of a miscarriage.

What should I look for?

Lead may be in the paint or glaze of a ceramic dish. Warning signs that lead may be more likely to be present are:

1. Color

Colorful ceramics painted red, orange, yellow, green, light blue or black may have lead, but white ceramics can have lead too

2. Rough or raised surface

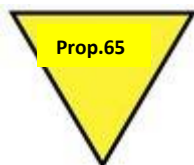
Ceramic dishes that have lead often feel rough and chalky or have raised surfaces, but even dishes with smooth and shiny surfaces may have lead. Dishes that are deteriorated, worn, cracked, chipped. Old/antique dishes may contain lead

3. Dishes that are deteriorated, worn, cracked, chipped, old/antique may contain lead

What can I do to prevent lead poisoning?

The only way to be sure that your ceramics do not contain lead is to test them at a laboratory. Many hardware stores and some pharmacies sell lead-testing kits, but these kits will not tell you how much lead is in the dish or if there is lead under the surface of the dish (these kits only test the surface of the dish). So, a negative result does not mean the dish is free of lead.

Do not use any ceramic dishes that you know contain lead on the inside or outside.



What are Proposition 65 and the yellow triangle about?

There are two laws which set standards for how much lead is allowed to be in dishes. One is federal, set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The other is for California and was set by California voters in Proposition 65. The California law is much stricter. Dishes that meet the FDA standards but not California's should be marked with a yellow triangle. However, not all manufacturers use the yellow triangle. You can ask the salesperson if the pattern of ceramic you want meets the Proposition 65 standards.

What other tips are there for preventing lead poisoning?

- **Do not store food or drinks in dishes that may contain lead.** Over time, lead can pass from the dishes into food; this is called leaching.
- **Do not serve acidic or hot food in dishes that may contain lead.** Acidic foods like lemons or salsa and hot drinks like coffee or tea, while not dangerous themselves, can pull (leach) lead into the food from the dish.
- **Do not heat or microwave food in dishes that may contain lead.** Heat can cause lead to pass from a dish into food.
- **Do not use ceramic dishes that are old, worn, chipped, or cracked.**

For more information, contact the Solano County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (707) 784-8070.

