Protecting East African Communities from Lead

WHAT IS LEAD?

We acknowledge families have shared these remedies and products for a long time to care for each other. This resource is meant to help families make informed choices to keep children safe from lead.

Lead is a metal that can get into the body without us knowing. Children with lead in their body don't look or act sick. The only way to know is with a blood test. The best way to keep children healthy is to keep them away from lead as much as possible.

If children have lead in their body, it can harm their health as they grow. It can cause trouble with things like behavior and learning.

Older buildings built before 1978 can have lead paint and dust. This is the most common way children are exposed to lead in the United States. Other sources of lead children are at risk of coming into contact with include contaminated soil.

Adults can be exposed to lead through certain jobs and hobbies and can accidentally track lead home.

Pregnant women are also at risk of harm from lead exposure and can pass lead to their babies.

SOURCES OF LEAD

Traditional medicines and remedies

Lead has been found in some traditional medicines used for things like stomach issues (examples: Alarcon, Greta, and Albayalde) or skin issues (example: Litargirio). Talk to your child's doctor about health concerns before giving children traditional medicines or remedies at home.

Cosmetics

Lead can be in certain cosmetics in very high levels, such as Kohl. Kohl has also been used as a remedy for eye conditions. Do not put Kohl in children's eyes. Talk to your child's doctor if you're worried about an eye issue before applying anything to their eyes. Lead has also been found in some Henna. Do not use henna on babies or very young children. If you use henna on older children, choose natural henna. Do not use black henna, it is not safe for children.

Foods/spices

Some spices and spice mixes bought or sent from outside the U.S. may have lead in them. Some examples: chili, turmeric, cinnamon. Avoid buying imported, unlabeled bulk spices. Choose instead spices that are sold in the U.S.

Cookware and dishware

Some cookware, like aluminum cookpots, that were brought or bought from outside the U.S. may contain lead and can cause lead to get into your food. Refrain from cooking food or serving food to children in old or imported cookware or dishware. The pots may have lead in the coating and can make food unsafe. Some cook and dish ware are labeled "lead-free" and are safer to use for making and serving food.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

- If you're not sure if a product your child has come into contact with contains lead, talk to your child's doctor about getting a blood lead test. Testing is free with Medicaid and covered by most insurances. If the test finds lead in a child's body, you and your doctor will work together to find where the lead is coming from. The doctor will keep checking the child's blood lead level to make sure they go down.
- All children with Medicaid should get a lead test by age 6, even if they have not been around lead. You or your child's doctor can call or email us for free help about children & lead.

To learn more about preventing lead exposure, scan this QR code!

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