

# LEAD Educator

KERN COUNTY CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAM

Fall/Winter 2014



**Kern County  
Childhood  
Lead  
Poisoning  
Prevention  
Program**

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**~Contact Us~**

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## LEAD in the NEWS

### Kohl and Surma A NEW Threat

There is a new threat in the fight against Childhood Lead Poisoning. Kern County is seeing a rising amount of kohl and surma used on young children and pregnant women. Kohl and surma may also be known as: kajal, al- kahl, but regardless of the name you give it still contains lead. Kohl and surma are popular in much of the world since ancient times, particularly in parts of Africa, the Middle East, Iran, Pakistan, and India. Kohl can be found in some Middle Eastern and Asian specialty markets.

It is illegal to import in the United States, however, it may be imported by families in their personal luggage after visiting family overseas. Kohl and surma are also advertised for mail order on some websites.

In some cultures, it is common for parents to apply kohl to the eyes of infants and children. Also, some people traditionally paint a newborn's umbilical stump with kohl, supposedly for medicinal purposes. Lead poisoning from Kohl and surma, unlike some sources of lead poisoning is avoidable, by educating the parents to stop the practice of using kohl and surma.

According to one study, done by the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), samples that were tested contained significant amounts of lead. In fact, the FDA found that lead sometimes accounts for more than half the weight of sample kohl usually in the form of lead sulfide. The risks associated with exposure to lead are especially serious for children who are at risk for absorbing the lead from the environment. Among the effects associated with high levels of lead exposure are: anemia, kidney problems, and neurological damage that may include seizures, coma and death.

## LEAD IT BE KNOWN...

### Kohl and Surma the NEW Threat Continued

If you have a family or patient you suspect is using kohl or surma, educate the client on the dangers of lead poisoning, and be especially careful to have the caregiver protect children from further exposure. Washing exposed household surfaces with soap and hot water is one way of reducing the risk of lead poisoning. A healthy diet consisting of three meals a day with snacks that are high in iron and calcium and with limited high fat content foods will help combat the lead in the child.

As a provider please educate your clients on the dangers of using kohl and surma. If the child is between the ages of six months and 2 years, order a blood lead test to determine the course of action the parent may need to take with the child. If you need more information or have questions please call Melvina Terry at 321- 3000.

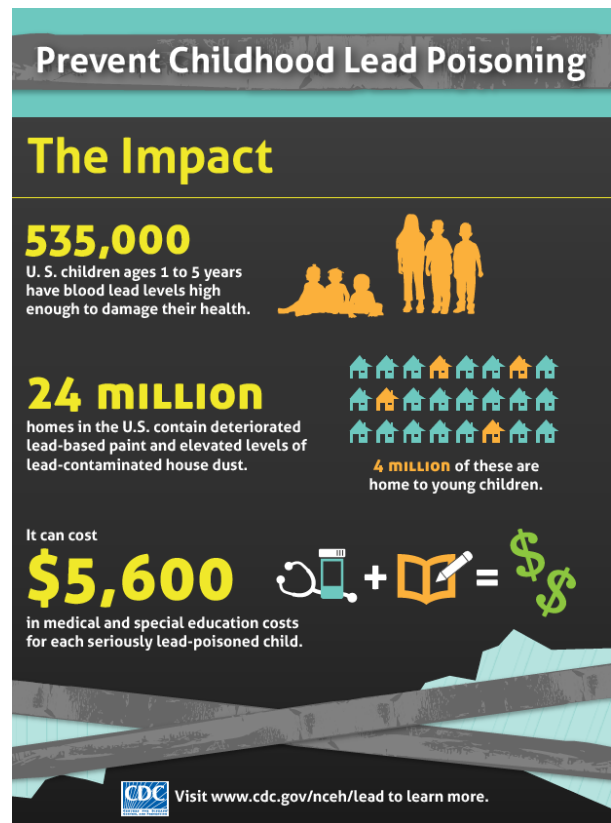
#### Lead Recalls and Resources Available Online:

<http://www.kernpublichealth.com/>

#### Double click on Child Health and Disability Prevention, Then click on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention

#### Lead Candy Information Available Online:

[www.cdph.ca.gov/data/document/s/fdbliclic07.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/data/document/s/fdbliclic07.pdf)



Beware of Lead in Second- Hand products. Many of the products bought at second- hand stores contain lead. Products that look hand painted or older need to be tested for lead. Lead test swabs are available at most hardware stores. To use the lead swab break the capsule, and squeeze out the liquid on a q- tip. If the tip turns red, the paint or product contains lead, and should not be used by adults or children. If the tip remains yellow, the product does not contain lead, and can safely be used in the home.

#### Kern County Childhood Lead Poisoning Report January, 2014 – November, 2014

**Number of New Cases – 6**

**Number of New EBLLs 151**

[10 of these were 15-19 mcg/dl, 19 were 10-14 mcg/dl and 122 were 5-9 mcg/dl]

**Primary Source: Chipping and peeling paint, dirt**