

sci.med.dentistry: Re: Those cheap lead fillings must go! <--- It's time to eliminate the whole list.

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We are in complete agreement with Dr. Jan Drew.

Those cheap lead dental fillings must be eliminated as soon as possible. Where else but in the mouth is lead permissible?

QUOTED FROM BELOW

It's time to eliminate the whole list.

JOEL

Consumer Watch | Lead products must go – now

By Jeff Gelles

Inquirer Columnist

Kara Burkhart will never forget the utterly ordinary moment that eventually led to her son Colton's life-threatening sickness and one of the largest recalls in U.S. history.

It was June 2003, the end of the school year, and she'd taken Colton with his older brother, Cody, to celebrate at a hamburger joint in their hometown of Redmond, Ore.

The boys saw a gumball-style vending machine, and begged for one of the trinkets inside. After lunch, Burkhart gave in. Colton went home with a medallion on a black cord bearing a symbol that looked like an hourglass.

Burkhart remembers seeing the toy once more at home, when she picked it up and put it on a shelf. The next time she saw it was last July, after Colton suffered a terrifying, unexplained illness.

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Though the 4-year-old had no recent history of sucking on toys, he had swallowed this one. It stayed in his stomach three weeks until an X-ray blamed it for his abdominal pains.

The medallion was surgically removed, but the worst news was yet to come: Some of Colton's symptoms, including anemia and lethargy, were the result of acute lead poisoning.

That 25-cent toy medallion contained about 40 percent lead.

Long-term effects unclear

The level of lead in Colton's blood rose as high as 123 micrograms per deciliter – more than a dozen times the threshold for danger set by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The CDC says no level is considered "safe." But at 10 micrograms, children clearly can suffer lead poisoning's classic effects: diminished intelligence, attention and behavioral problems, and impaired hearing and growth.

Since last summer, treatment has cut Colton's blood-lead level to 37 micrograms, and the family hopes the long-term effects will be limited.

"But you just don't know," said Burkhart, who still sometimes cries when recalling fearing that Colton's lead level was enough to have killed him. "He was a very sick little boy," she said.

Colton's poisoning led to the first of three recalls of lead toy jewelry announced by four importers and the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Last week's was by far the largest: 150 million pieces of cheap jewelry, half of them believed to contain large amounts of this toxic metal, which were sold for 25 to 75 cents in gumball-style machines from January 2002 through last month.

Toss out any cheap metal jewelry

Despite its size, though, this recall only addresses part of a larger problem. And the story behind it raises more questions than it answers.

Is this the only lead jewelry out there? Not likely, concedes Brian Kovens of A&A Global Industries of Maryland, one of the four importers.

"Lead has been used for years," Kovens said, and not just in vending-machine jewelry, but also in inexpensive trinkets distributed in other ways.

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Toy-jewelry makers have been drawn to lead because it's cheap, heavy, and easy to work with. For that same reason, parents should consider any cheap metal toys suspect. When in doubt, throw them out.

In this case, the four importers inexplicably relied on a surface coating to protect kids from the lead, and used labs that performed only the most basic "wipe" test on the jewelry.

The CPSC says any such toy should also be subjected to tests with saline solution and acid, to mimic the effects of saliva and stomach acid.

Lead toys aren't the main source of lead poisoning for the estimated 434,000 young children currently believed to suffer it. By far, the biggest risk still comes from deteriorating lead paint in older housing.

Many other uses, such as in gasoline and in color ink used in newspapers and comic books, were eliminated by the 1980s, as lead's dangers came to be recognized.

But other uses linger. In some parts of the country, the CDC says, up to a third of lead-poisoning cases are believed linked to "nonessential" items decorated with or made of lead, such as eating and drinking utensils, toys and cosmetics.

It's time to eliminate the whole list.