

August 10, 2006

Guidance for parents on recent recall of bendable animal toys containing lead.

What toys are involved in this recall?

Plastic bendable dogs and cats given away by libraries participating in a national summer reading program contained unsafe levels of lead. Washington public health officials and local libraries are alerting families that these toys given to children as summer reading program incentives pose a potential health hazard.

What do the toys look like?

The toys are bendable dogs and cats in assorted styles and are about 4 inches long. See photo below.



Where were these toys available?

At least 22 libraries across Washington purchased these toys from Highsmith Publications, a company that supplies incentives, prizes and other materials to libraries. Libraries gave the bendable animal toys away as a reading incentive for "Paws, Claws, Scales and Tales", a summer reading program. A list of libraries that ordered these items, as well as information about childhood lead poisoning prevention, is available on the public health web site at www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm. The bendable dog and cat toys are also available from several other toy distributors.

How much lead was found in the toys?

Tests conducted by the Indiana Department of Health found the toys contained .4 and .24 percent lead. Follow-up testing by Highsmith found similar levels. The maximum federal allowable level for lead in toys is .06 percent. The toy distributor had previously tested the product and found the bendable toys to be in compliance with federal regulations.

Can these toys harm my child?

These toys are a potential health hazard and children should not be handling them. Since the toys are small, children may put them in their mouths, suck or chew on them. Handling lead-containing objects and then putting their hands in their mouths can also expose children to lead. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test. Parents should also carefully check their child's environment for other possible sources of lead such as lead paint dust, soil, pottery or lead dust from parent's workplaces and hobbies.

How does exposure to lead harm a child?

Young children are more at risk for exposure to lead because children explore their environment by putting their toys, hands and other objects in their mouths. Lead can interfere with normal brain development, resulting in permanently reduced IQ and behavioral problems. Even small amounts of lead can be harmful. Exposure to lead paint dust from older homes is the most common cause of childhood lead poisoning in Washington.

What should I do if we have some of these toys?

Families who received these toys should take them back to their local library. Parents can also dispose of them in the household trash. Family members should wash their hands after handling these toys. If a parent has seen their child chewing or sucking on one of the toys, they should contact their health care provider and consider a blood lead test.

Who can I contact for more information about this health alert?

For more information on this health alert or to order lead poisoning prevention educational materials call the Department of Health at 360-236-4252.

Who can I contact for more information about lead and how to protect my family from lead poisoning?

The Washington lead hotline, (800) 909-9898, is a free telephone information service for parents and others who are concerned about lead and want to know more about preventing lead poisoning. You may also visit our website at www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm.

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www.doh.wa.gov/EHSPHL/Epidemiology/NICE/Lead/default.htm