



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, New York 12237

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner

August 2007

Dear Colleague:

The purpose of this letter is to alert you to recent recalls of children's toys manufactured by Mattel and Fisher-Price that could contain excessive levels of lead in surface paints and to provide guidance on lead testing. Mattel's recall is comprised of toys from its Fisher-Price unit. A list of the recalled toys can be accessed on the New York State Department of Health's (NYSDOH) website, <http://www.health.state.ny.us/environmental/lead/recalls/index.htm> or the Consumer Product Safety Commission's website at <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

Parents should be advised that if their child has any of the recalled toys, they should be removed from the child's access immediately. The State Department of Health is recommending that parents of children with recalled toys discuss the need for a blood lead test with their health care provider. Blood lead tests should be done for all children less than age 6 years who have played with one of these toys, especially if the child frequently chews on toys or puts toys in his or her mouth, or has frequent hand-to-mouth activity that is typical of young children. Although there are not enough studies to know for certain, the Department of Health believes that the greatest risk of exposure to lead from toys comes from frequent chewing or mouthing on the toy or from frequent hand-to-mouth activity after playing with toys. Just holding or playing with the toy with hand contact alone may not result in as much lead exposure.

As a reminder, based on New York State Public Health Law and regulations, **health care providers are required to screen with blood lead tests all children at or around age one year and again at or around age two years.** Health care providers are also required to do a lead risk assessment annually for all children up to age six years and test all children found to be at risk for lead exposure. The purpose of routine lead screening is to identify children who have elevated blood lead levels because of exposure to lead and to implement appropriate follow-up. While children can be exposed to lead from a number of possible sources, lead dust and paint chips from deteriorating lead paint are still the leading source of childhood lead poisoning in New York State.

New York State has the largest number and proportion of old housing in the entire nation. Children who live in old housing (all housing built before 1978, but especially housing built before 1950) may be at risk for exposure to lead if the paint is chipping, peeling, or otherwise wearing down due to disrepair. They may also be at risk if the home is undergoing renovations and remodeling if lead-safe work practices are not followed. Of the approximately 5,000 children diagnosed with lead poisoning each year in New York State, the vast majority are exposed to lead from lead paint in housing.

At lower blood lead levels, a child with lead poisoning usually does not look or feel sick. The only way to know is to get a blood lead test. In the past, lead exposure was often not diagnosed until a child had a very high blood lead level (≥ 70 mcg/dL) with symptoms of lead toxicity such as lethargy, ataxia, seizures, and coma. Children with these symptoms require immediate hospitalization and treatment. However, blood lead levels in this range are now extremely uncommon. The vast majority of children with lead poisoning will not have any obvious signs or symptoms.

Enclosed is a question and answer handout for distribution to parents to address their concerns over the recent recalled toys, and questions and answers to be used as guidance for health care providers. Also enclosed is a contact list of the Regional Lead Resource Centers, and local health departments, and an order form for lead related educational materials that are available free of charge from the state health department. Additionally, a copy of the press release issued August 17, 2007 by the Governor's Office is included.

We thank you for your support of our efforts to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in New York State, and encourage you to continue your efforts to help achieve the goal of lead poisoning elimination. If you have further questions, please contact the NYSDOH Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (518) 402-5706.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard F. Daines".

Richard F. Daines, M.D.
Commissioner of Health

Enclosures