

Beware of Lead

Food, Candy, and Spices



Food, candy, and spices from other countries can contain lead, such as brightly colored spices, cocoa, and dark chocolate. Read labels and eat foods, candies, and spices made in the United States. These are monitored for food safety and less likely to contain lead.

Lead and Your Health

Lead poisoning is extremely dangerous for adults and children. After lead gets in the body, it can cause lifelong brain damage, permanent injuries, and disabilities. There is no safe level of lead. Many people with lead poisoning don't feel sick. A blood lead test is the only way to know if you have high levels of lead.



Candies and Foods

- Imported candy, especially if it contains chili powder, or tamarind
- Imported dried fruits, especially prunes and plums
- Imported canned milk and fish products, especially those from Russia and Ukraine
- Cocoa powder and dark chocolate because they can contain low levels of lead
- Cassava chips and cassava flour because they can contain low levels of lead





Spices

- Buy spices made in the United States. Some imported spices can have high levels of lead such as those from Bangladesh, China, Georgia, India, Nepal, the Middle East, Latin America, Pakistan, and Vietnam.
- Avoid using spices that are not labeled. Imported spices that are yellow, red, and brown, such as turmeric, chili powder and cinnamon, are more likely to contain lead.



Eat a Balanced Diet

- Eat foods that have **calcium, iron, and vitamin C** to help lower levels of lead in the body.
- Eating fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts, and healthy proteins gives you important nutrients. Eating a variety of foods reduces the risk of lead poisoning from one specific food.



Healthy Gardening

Get your soil tested for lead. Soils that can have higher lead levels are in cities, near older homes, and near roadways and orchards.

How Lead Gets in Foods

- Ingredients are grown in soil that contains lead.
- Food is made outside of the United States.
- Food is packed in cans that are sealed with lead.
- Lead powders are added to some imported or unlabeled spices to make them heavier or more colorful.

If you eat food or spices that may contain lead, talk to your health care provider about a blood lead test.

Learn More

health.ny.gov/leadsources

