

Beware of Lead

Herbal and Folk Remedies



Herbal and folk remedies are commonly used in many cultures. Many can be safely used. However, some have high levels of lead that can cause lead poisoning and other health problems.



Lead and 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.



Make Informed Choices

Your religion, traditions, and culture are important. It's also important to be aware that herbal and folk remedies may contain lead.

- **Ayurvedic Medicine:** Rasa Sastra practices make medicine by mixing herbs with harmful metals like lead, mercury, or arsenic. The medicine is often in tablet form.
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine, Tibetan Medicine, and remedies from Southeast Asia:** Herbal medicines, bath powders, and liquid remedies (tinctures) may contain lead, mercury, or arsenic.
- **Traditional remedies from Latin America:** Bath or deodorant powders and remedies for empacho may contain lead.
- **Traditional remedies from the Middle East:** Home remedies used to treat common ailments such as stomachache, diarrhea, eye injuries, and gum pain with teething powder may contain lead.
- **Medicated baby powder, bath powder, and deodorant powders from Asia and Latin America** can contain lead powders. They are called litargirio, hongdan, or huangdan and have a red, orange, tan, or yellow tint.
- **Black eye powders** such as kohl, kajal, al-Kahal, surma, tiro, tozali, or kwalli often have very high lead levels.
- **Spices** used to treat a health condition, like turmeric, may be colored using lead powder.



Herbal and Folk Remedies

- Read labels and avoid products that include: naga bhasma, hongdan, huangdan, litargirio, azarcon, and greta.
- Use products made in the United States. These may have much lower levels of lead than imported products.
- Talk to your health care provider about any remedies that you and your family take. Strongly consider other options they recommend.
- Check the brand or retailer's websites for proof that the remedies were tested for lead and other toxic ingredients.
- If you think a product you use may contain lead, talk to your health care provider about a blood lead test.



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health.ny.gov/leadsources

