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Lead in Lipstick

What is lead?

Lead is a bluish-gray, heavy metal that occurs naturally in trace amounts in the environment, in numerous forms...

Where does the lead come from?

Lead is part of the Earth and occurs at an average concentration of 100 parts-per-million (ppm). It is found in the air, water, and soil at concentrations that would raise health concerns. Lead is found in many products we use and consume on a daily basis, including food and...

Should I be concerned about reports of lead in lipstick?

Reports about lead in lipstick are not new. In the past, the FDA evaluated questions regarding lead in lipstick. There have been many reports over the years alleging that there are high levels of lead in lipstick and providing a link to information of Lead in Lipstick Internet Hoax. Most of these reports have been unfounded and have been circulating for many years.

- Link to information of Lead in Lipstick Internet Hoax
- (1) http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl_lead
 - (2) <http://www.hoax-slayer.com/lead-lipstick.html>
 - (3) <http://www.scambusters.org/lipstick.html>

Because of the ubiquitous presence of lead in the environment, lead is a naturally occurring level constituent in many products, including cosmetics. However, lead is not permitted in the colors that are used in food, drugs, and cosmetics. FDA has a regular testing program for these specifications. However, FDA may consider personal care products on a case-by-case basis,

products on rare occasion when they have found the levels to be unacceptably high.

ingredients

In 2007, a report was released by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (CSC) that presented an analysis of lead in lipstick products. The CSC report stated that more than half of 33 brand-name lipsticks tested contained detectable levels of lead, with levels ranging from 0.03 to 0.65 parts per million (ppm). The CSC report noted none of these lipsticks listed lead as an ingredient.

In an article published in the July/August 2009 issue of the peer-reviewed *Journal of Cosmetic Science*, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) scientists report that they have developed, validated and employed a highly sensitive and rigorous test method to analyze the **total** lead content in lipsticks, not the amount of lead to which a consumer who used the product would have been exposed. This rigorous method releases **all** of the lead present in the product for analysis. However, consumers who use lipstick ingest only a tiny fraction of the lipstick they apply and that tiny fraction becomes trapped inside larger particles and then excreted by the body.

FDA scientists tested the same selection of lipsticks evaluated by the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics (CSC) and found the lead levels present to be safe and lower than limits recommended by other public health authorities for lead in cosmetics, including the very conservative limit of 5 parts per million (ppm) set by California under Proposition 65, as well as the draft Canadian guidance of 10 ppm.

Link to letter from California Attorney General regarding Prop 65 and Lead in Lipstick:

http://ag.ca.gov/prop65/pdfs/Lipstick_Letter-a.pdf

Not surprisingly, FDA found trace levels of lead in all of the lipsticks tested, ranging from 0.09 ppm to 3.06 ppm, with an average value of 1.07 ppm. FDA concluded that the lead levels found are within the range that would be expected from lipsticks formulated with permitted color additives and other ingredients that had been prepared under good manufacturing practices. Exposure to lead from lipstick containing even the highest levels of lead reported by FDA of 3 ppm would be 400 times lower than exposure from consuming drinking water containing lead at the limit established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). FDA states on its Web site that these results confirm that the low levels of lead found in the lipsticks are not a safety concern.

For information on the FDA study of lead in lipstick, visit:

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductandIngredientSafety/Prod...>

To read the full study as published in the July/August 2009 issue of the *Journal of Cosmetic Science*, see link below: <http://journal.sconline.org/pdf/cc2009open/cc060n04/p00405-...>

See link below for FDA's 2009 "Q and A" about inquiries concerning lead in lipstick:

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductandIngredientSafety/Prod...>

Link to ACSH characterization of CSC Poison Kiss Report:

http://www.acsh.org/publications/pubID.1650/pub_detail.asp

What are the possible routes of exposure?

People are most likely to be exposed to lead through air pollution and the consumption of food and drinking water. Exposure can also occur by inadvertently ingesting contaminated soil, dust, or lead-based paint. Lead may be carried from the soil into plants grown in the soil. Lead paint is a major source of environmental exposure for children who ingest older, flaking paint, paint chips, and weathered powdered paint. Lead can leach into drinking water from lead-based solder used in water pipes and into foods or liquids stored in ceramic containers made with lead glazing.

The trace levels of lead compounds found in lipstick are inorganic and not easily absorbed through the skin.

What are the possible toxic effects of lead?

Exposure to lead may be hazardous to health, depending on the quantity of lead and nature of the exposure. Because of lead's many modes of action in biological systems, lead could potentially affect any system or organ in the body when a person is exposed at high enough levels.

What have the regulatory authorities done to control exposure to lead?

Because of the potential for lead to cause adverse health effects, regulatory authorities worldwide have developed regulations to limit exposures to lead. The levels that are set take into account the toxicity of lead, the route of exposure (inhalation, oral or dermal), the anticipated amount of exposure, other sources of possible lead exposure, and then factor in a large safety margin.

For water, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has adopted an Action Level for public water supplies of 15 µg/L (15 parts-per-billion). Link to summary of EPA requirements for lead in drinking water: http://www.epa.gov/safewater/lcrrm/pdfs/grg_lcrrm_2004.pdf

For food, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has set a limit of 5 µg/L (5 parts-per-billion) in bottled drinking water. FDA has also set a limit of 100 parts-per-billion (0.1 ppm) for certain candies intended for consumption by small children, assuming an acceptable daily exposure of 6 µg/day. There are FDA lead standards for other foods as well.

Useful Fact: One part per million (ppm) is the scientific term used to denote one part in 1,000,000 parts which is the equivalent of one drop of water diluted into the fuel tank of a compact car or one second in 11.5 days. One part per billion is 1/1000 of a ppm or one second in 31.7 years.

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