

National Paint, Varnish and Lacquer Association

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August 13, 1969

Mr. W. Leo Yates
Family Life Specialist
Cooperative Extension Service
Clemson University
Clemson, South Carolina 29631

Dear Mr. Yates:

We have your recent circular letter requesting answers to a list of questions on the subject of "Lead Paint Poisoning of Children". Our answers to these questions are as follows:

Question # 1: Do children become poisoned by liquid or dried paint or both?

Answer: Lead is a cumulative poison. Lead poisoning results from continued ingestion of lead. For this reason, it is likely that any lead poisoning related to paint develops from eating dried paint chips. I have never heard of a case of lead poisoning which developed from the ingestion of a liquid paint.

Question # 2: Is lead based paint poisonous through giving off fumes? How volatile is it?

Answer: At normal temperatures the fumes or vapors given off by lead based paints contain no lead and are no more dangerous than the vapors given off by another paint which contains the same volatile solvents. In other words, the matter of toxicity involved in breathing paint vapors depends not on the lead content but upon the composition of the volatile solvents and the concentration of the vapors. There is no "lead fume" problem with paint.

PROGRESS THROUGH COOPERATION

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Question # 3 : Do children of any one socio-economic class seem to experience more lead poisoning than another?

Answer: I believe most cases of lead poisoning have been traced to children of under-privileged groups since substandard housing in which they live is more likely to have old, lead-containing paint flaking from the interior walls. Interior paints have not contained white lead pigments for approximately thirty years. The greatest danger, therefore, occurs in old tenement dwellings which have walls that were painted 25 to 30 years ago, and which have not been maintained properly.

Pica, the craving of some children for unnatural food (paint and wood chips, for example) is probably related to a nutritional deficiency.

Question # 4 : Does poisoning come from inhalation, touch, or ingestion of the lead based paint?

Answer: To our knowledge, lead poisoning as it relates to paint is caused only by ingestion of dried paint chips which contain lead.

Question # 5 : What are some sources of studies done on characteristics common to cases of poisoning of children by lead based paint?

Answer: For information on studies of characteristics common to cases of poisoning of children by lead based paints, I would suggest contacting the Public Health Departments of large cities. The Lead Industries Association, 292 Madison Avenue, New York City, can also be helpful in providing this type information.

Question # 6 : What are the symptoms exhibited by a child poisoned by a lead based paint?

Answer: It is our understanding that typical symptoms are:

- 1) Pains in the stomach
- 2) Frequent vomiting
- 3) Crossness and irritation without a visible reason
- 4) Many headaches
- 5) Muscle weakness and constant tiredness
- 6) Spasms

These same symptoms are, of course, also related to many other disorders. Since the subject of symptoms is a medical matter, we suggest contacting medical doctors as well as the sources mentioned in No. 5 for more specific information.

Question # 7: What anti-toxin or de-toxification procedures are recommended?

Answer: We must refer this question to medical doctors. It is very important, however, to have a child suspected of eating paint chips, examined at once by a doctor.

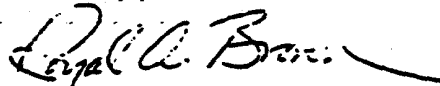
Question # 8: What paints generally use lead as a base? by type -

Answer: As stated earlier, lead is rarely used in modern interior paints. There is no longer any purpose in using lead pigments in paints intended for interior use since better lead-free pigments for this purpose are available at lower cost. Lead pigments are used today in structural steel primers, in some exterior house paints, and other exterior coatings. Lead pigments are relatively expensive and their use is generally confined to providing rust-inhibitive properties on steel surfaces and for good exterior durability in certain exterior wood and metal paints.

I am enclosing a copy of a publication entitled, "How to Prevent Lead Poisoning in the Home". This booklet was published several years ago and is now out of print. We are in the process of revising the subject matter and expect to publish a new booklet on this subject in the near future. I am also enclosing a copy of our booklet directed to the painting of childrens' toys and furniture which you may find of interest.

We would certainly appreciate having you send us a summary of the findings you develop from your questionnaire.

Sincerely yours,



Royal A. Brown
Technical Director

RAB/fms
Enclosures