

October 7, 1942.

Mr. E. B. Read, Plant Manager,
The Univis Lens Company,
Dayton, Ohio.

Dear Mr. Read:

I have your letter of September 30, to which I am glad to reply. From what you have told me in your letter, it seems entirely possible that your employee has lead poisoning. It would not be possible to arrive at a diagnosis from the information which you have given, but the description of her illness is compatible with the diagnosis of lead poisoning. Moreover, from what you have told me of the opportunities for contact with white lead paint, it is apparent that there is an adequate opportunity for exposure. I may say that it is incredible to me that a situation would exist in which anybody would put into his mouth a brush used for a white lead paint. Anyone guilty of such gross and incredibly stupid performance is asking for prompt trouble, and if you have had a number of people who have followed this practice, it is astonishing that you have not had very serious cases before this time.

Lead compounds are absorbed from the stomach and intestine after they are swallowed, and they are also absorbed after the inhalation of dust and finely divided matter containing lead suspended in the air. In general, most cases of industrial lead poisoning are the result of inhalation of dusts and fumes. I judge from what you have told me that the only opportunity for exposure in your plant is through the girls swallowing the lead. This could result from the practice which you mentioned, but it could also result from handling food, tobacco, chewing gum and other articles put into the mouth after contamination with paint on the fingers. Accordingly, a considerable care should be exercised against having the food or other such materials in the workrooms, and the facilities for washing hands should be adequate in quantity and quality. You should also issue instructions written and expressed by word of mouth, warning against the practice you have mentioned and implementing it by the prompt discharge of any employee who violates the rule. If necessary, you should maintain supervision in such a way that this practice will not be indulged in.

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Mr. E. B. Read - (2) - October 7, 1942.

Lead paints are not absorbed through the skin or through an open cut in the skin. In fact, absorption of lead compounds through the skin, with the exception of a few organic liquid lead compounds, like tetraethyl lead, does not occur to any important or practical degree.

The only satisfactory cure for lead poisoning is its prevention. For this reason, I think you should not attempt to make arrangements for having your employees treated. You would be wise, however, to obtain such advice as is necessary to see that proper precautions against poisoning are taken in your plant. It may be that what I have told you above will serve that purpose. If you have any doubt on that score and will let me know about it, I shall give you my best advice. If you think that some qualified or experienced person should visit your plant and survey it and give you an opinion concerning what should be done, I should be glad to make it convenient to do this as soon as possible. I must be frank in saying that I do not know anyone engaged in this type of work in Dayton whom I could recommend to assist you in this way. There may be such a one there, and I do not say there is not, but I do not know, and therefore, I make no recommendation along that line.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

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THE UNIVIS LENS COMPANY... DAYTON, OHIO

September 30, 1942.

The University of Cincinnati,
College of Medicine,
Kettering Research Laboratory,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Gentlemen:

We have an employee who is ill and has just recently entered the Miami Valley Hospital here in Dayton.

The diagnosis in her case is "Lead Poisoning".

Now, we do not know whether this is the final diagnosis or not because she is still under observation. However, she has lost some forty pounds in the last several weeks. She is nauseated, has abdominal cramps, severe backache, 60 per cent Hemoglobin, and has considerable ~~aluminum~~ ^{ALBUMIN} in her urine.

This girl is one of some thirty girls in this room who assemble a high index glass with a low index glass, preparatory to fusing. In order that the high index glass will not slide off the low index, the high index glass is painted around the edges with a brush dipped in white lead paint. The girl who is ill is one of six girls who has been in the habit of running her brush between her lips to put a point on the brush so that she can assemble more lenses. We have warned all of the girls many times not to put the brushes in their mouths but this one girl and five others still do this from time to time.

Knowing that you at the University of Cincinnati have been doing considerable research work on lead poisoning, we are writing you for advice.

We would like to know how a person can contract this poisoning, through the mouth, the nostrils, an open cut, or whether it can be contracted through the pores?

The University of Cincinnati

9/30/42

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Secondly, we would like to know if there is a cure, where the best place is, and what doctors in these parts are best qualified to take care of such cases.

We would be pleased to hear from you and remain, with kindest regards

Very truly yours,

THE UNIVIS LENS COMPANY


Plant Manager

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