

January 8, 1942

Jessop Products, Inc.,
545 Fifth Avenue,
New York City.

Attention: Mr. R. A. Coram

Dear Sir:

I have your letter of December 29, concerning information on the subject of lead poisoning. Perhaps I can give you a few words of information which may be useful to you.

The committee of the American Public Health Association, of which I am chairman, is engaged in the preparation of a report which will appear in due time and which will bring this subject up to date. It will be some time before this report is available. I should say in all frankness, that when it does appear, it will be of little practical use to you in way of information on lead poisoning, as brought about by the absorption of lead compounds through the skin. The fact is that with the exception of tetraethyl lead and a few related compounds that at present are curiosities, lead compounds do not penetrate the skin in significant quantities. It is possible that this is not strictly true with regard to hirsute skin areas. There are a few facts which would seem to indicate that the hair or the hair follicle can absorb inorganic lead compounds and transmit them through the skin into the body. The evidence for this, in my opinion, is not good, and I do not believe it is true. On the other hand, the facts would have to be worked out by suitable experimental means before one could be certain. In general, however, I think it is fair to say that if we were concerned only with the problem of lead absorption through the skin from hair dyes, we would be very little concerned about any dangers involved therein. Perhaps greater dangers arise from the contamination of the skin and the hair with lead compounds, - this bringing about contamination of the hands. There is also some danger in the case of mothers with small children.

Quite apart from the actual facts involved, there is a very considerable antagonism in public health circles for hair dyes that contain poisonous mineral elements. This is true, of course, of cosmetics in general. A great many difficulties have occurred through the use of cosmetics containing poisonous materials, and the result has been to build up a great prejudice against poisonous ingredients; first, because they are unnecessary, and second, because they are potentially dangerous. Because of this feeling, which is almost certain to lead to difficulties on the part of the distributors of such cosmetics, these materials should be avoided, if it is possible. In view of the present prevailing point of view, with particular reference to the dangers of lead

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poisoning, I should be loathe to distribute a product of this kind, containing as much as one percent of lead. You have not asked for my opinion on this, but I give it to you as one who is in a position to recognize the trend in point of view on these matters. Despite this point of view, however, I repeat that, in my opinion, there is little or no danger of absorbing measurable quantities of lead through the skin of the scalp, as a result of the use of an inorganic lead compound in a hair dye. However, there are no articles available, so far as I know, that would tend to approve this point with specific relation to lead absorption by the scalp.

Very truly yours,

Robert A. Kehoe, M. D.

JESSOP PRODUCTS, INC.

Manufacturing Chemists

FIVE FORTY-FIVE FIFTH AVENUE

NEW YORK

December 29, 1941.

Dr. Robert A. Kehoe,
University of Cincinnati,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Dear Doctor:

I am advised by the American Public Health Association, 1790 Broadway, New York City, that you are Chairman of the Lead Poisoning Committee.

We have a copy of a book published by them, dated 1930 on lead poisoning.

I am writing to ask if there is any recent data?

We are manufacturers of a hair color restorer and the product contains one per cent (1%) of lead.

What we would like to have in particular is anything pertaining directly to us or on the subject of lead poisoning through the skin.

If you have any pamphlets for sale on this subject please be good enough to let us know the cost thereof as we would like to buy the same.

Very truly yours,

JESSOP PRODUCTS, INC.,

By

Ray A. Coram
Secretary.

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