

Controls Are Studied For Kitchen Items Plated With Silver

FDA Cites Potential Threat
Of Lead Poisoning, Issues
Call for All Available Data

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Citing a potentially serious (lead-poisoning) threat, the Food and Drug Administration started an investigation to determine whether controls should be placed on a wide variety of silver-plated cups, dishes and other kitchenware.

The agency said it examined 90 different silver-plated articles including baby cups, tankards, coffee sets, goblets and salad bowls and discovered some of them contained lead that could get into the food they contain.

In some cases, it said, the lead content being leached from the products was as high as 316 parts per million, compared with a limit of seven parts per million that the agency allows for ceramic dinnerware.

In a notice published in yesterday's Federal Register, the agency issued a call for all available information on what materials are used in silver-plated hollow ware, what such products are used for in terms of the foods they contain and other data designed to help it determine whether it should clamp a limit on lead content.

Late last year and earlier this year the FDA recalled some goblets, brandy snifters and baby cups after a check disclosed high lead content.

The agency said most of the products are manufactured in the U.S., although a few are imported.

The agency said it believed that repeated use by infants of children's cups or bowls with a high lead content could pose a chronic health hazard because children are much more susceptible than adults to brain damage from lead and because children tend to absorb ingested lead to a greater degree than adults.

"However," it added, "highly frequent use of silver-plated hollow-ware items leaching high levels of lead may pose a serious health hazard to adults."

FDA Warns Of Lead

Washington — (UPI) — The Food and Drug Administration says many silver-plated cups, goblets, bowls and other dinnerware may cause lead poisoning.

The FDA yesterday asked anyone with information to submit it by March for a determination as to whether something needs to be done.

The hazard, FDA said, is that food or drink put into the vessels can react chemically to draw out lead. It said children would be especially susceptible to the resulting poisoning.

FDA Probes Holloware Lead Hazard

Washington — (UPI) — Citing a potentially serious (lead poisoning) threat, the Food and Drug Administration has launched an investigation to determine if controls should be placed on a wide variety of silver plated cups, dishes, and other kitchenware.

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Notice in Register

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Hazard for Infants

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Study of Scottish Children Reports on Contamination of Drinking Water

By LAWRENCE J. HAYES

Mental retardation among Glasgow children has been linked in a Scottish epidemiological study to contamination of drinking water with low levels of lead.

The Scottish doctors found that the probability of mental retardation was much greater when the pregnant woman or infant drank water containing more than 800 micrograms of lead per liter. Some lead can cross the placenta to the fetus in the womb.

The World Health Organization considers 100 micrograms the upper limit of acceptability for lead in drinking water. A microgram is one-millionth of a gram.

The results indicate that "every effort should be made to reduce the lead content of drinking water," the doctors said in their report in the March 15 issue of *Lancet*, a prestigious medical journal published in London. The doctors did not state those areas where water lead levels exceeded the W.H.O. recommendation.

Mental retardation results from a wide variety of causes other than lead. This metal's potential "importance lies in the fact that lead contamination can be eliminated or at least reduced" by removing the metal from water tanks and pipes in the plumbing system, according to the team of 10 researchers from the Glasgow health department, the University of Glasgow and two hospitals.

However, because such measures take several years to achieve, they suggested an effective alternative short-term solution — treating lead-contaminated water supplies in the holding reservoirs with calcium salts such as lime, as has been done in Glasgow.

Though evidence exists that young children's mental capacity can be permanently impaired from lead poisoning, researchers have not known if the relatively small amounts of lead in water and the atmosphere represent a hazard to mental development.

"As in all epidemiological studies of this type, it is not possible to prove that lead exposure causes mental retardation, but the results are strongly suggestive that this is so," the doctors said.

The results are based on a study of 154 children, 77 of whom were mentally retarded. The other half served as scientific controls, that is they were healthy children who were not retarded.

Link to Retardation

The lead content in the water was reported to be higher in the retarded group, and the probability of mental retardation was significantly increased when the lead content in the water exceeded 800 micrograms per liter. The 11 children from homes with the highest levels belonged to the group who were mentally retarded.

High concentrations of lead are known to damage the brain's gray matter and basal ganglia. But the mechanism by which lead may produce mental retardation is not known.

Because energy requirements of the infant brain are greater than those of the mature brain, the doctors suggested that lead interfered with enzymatic reactions that proved harmful to the development of the infant brain.

Further, they said, "if the lead content of water is important, it is likely to be especially so in infants who are bottle-fed and consume up to two liters of water daily in their feeds, and who would seem to have an increased absorption of lead in infancy as compared with adults." A liter is slightly more than a quart.

Further support for the researchers' thesis came from results of blood tests for lead, which were significantly higher in the group of retarded children. The doctors warned that this evidence by itself did not imply a causative role for lead in mental retardation because "mentally retarded children may have higher blood-lead levels than normal, possibly because" such children have a craving for paint and other lead-containing substances.

To help confirm a cause-and-effect relationship between lead and mental retardation, the doctors recommended a long-term study that would measure from birth the intelligence and mental development of a larger number of children and compare these results according to the lead levels their mothers drank during pregnancy and what they drank in their formative years.

However, "there are obvious practical and ethical objections to" such a study in pregnant women "in such high lead exposure situations" since the present high levels of lead in drinking water are totally unacceptable in such a population," the researchers said.

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Lead, Baby Deaths Linked

Harmful amounts of lead and cadmium passed from pregnant women to their children may be the cause of some cases of sudden infant deaths, a researcher at the New Jersey College of Medicine and Dentistry said at Newark.

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