

Please don't eat the snow; scientists find high lead

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Snow, the fluffy wintertime delight of children who toss it, mold it and often eat it, is loaded with dangerously high levels of poisonous lead, according to laboratory studies here.

"The old saying 'pure as the driven snow' just isn't so," said Dr. David Grandstaff, a Temple University geochemist who, along with Temple environmental engineer George Myer, ran analyses on the white stuff.

Myer and Grandstaff collected snow in plastic bags from Temple's city campus after a Feb. 13 snowstorm, then hauled their booty back to the lab where they used a new technique called anode-stripping voltammetry to measure lead levels.

Their conclusion: "Levels of lead in the snow we collected are 10 to 20 times greater than the water standard set by the Environmental Protection Agency," said Myer.

The EPA lead health safety limit for water is 50 parts per billion.

"Some of the high readings we got were up in the hundreds, up to 600 to 800 parts per billion," Grandstaff said Tuesday.

"Under the circumstances," said Myer, "we strongly suggest that parents warn their children never to eat snow, either as it is or in the form of snow cones. It can be dangerous to their health."

The scientists also tested icicles and said they found them to have even higher lead concentrations,

apparently picked up by water rolling across spouts and roofs where lead had settled from the air.

The tests showed that 80 percent of the lead contamination in snow and icicles was in the form of lead chlorides and lead bromides, directly traceable to automobile exhaust fumes, said Myer.

"We were a bit surprised by the findings," said Grandstaff, "but once you think about it, it shouldn't be surprising. There's no chance for the lead to get out of the snow or frozen water."

"Eating snow is probably not in itself enough to make somebody ill," said Grandstaff, "but with children, all these things add up."



**Sunshine
real!**