



Story available at <http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2007/08/22/features/health/38-hazard.txt>

Published on Wednesday, August 22, 2007.
Last modified on 8/22/2007 at 2:10 am

Housing center releases lead hazard fact sheets

By Gazette News Services

The National Center for Healthy Housing has released two fact sheets to help parents make sense of the recent recalls of toys tainted with lead paint.

The "Testing for Lead in Consumer Items" fact sheet explains the various options that parents have for testing household items to confirm or deny the presence of lead. The "Toys and Childhood Lead Exposure" fact sheet explains how lead ends up in toys and how the lead can be ingested by children through normal play. Both fact sheets are available at www.nchh.org.

Parents can send products and objects for testing to EPA-recognized laboratories. Also available are laboratory tests for "leachable" lead, which determines how much lead in an object might be dissolved in the saliva and digestive tract of a person. The fact sheets provide additional details on the tests and lead poisoning in general.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 310,000 young children in the U.S. have elevated levels of lead in their blood. Lead harms children's nervous systems and is associated with reduced IQ, behavioral problems, and learning disabilities. In large doses, it can cause coma, convulsions and death.

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