

January 4, 2024

Public Health Considerations Regarding High Blood Lead Levels Associated with Consumption of Recalled Cinnamon-Containing Applesauce Products.

FDA, CDC, and State and Local Partners are Investigating a Potential Link Between High Blood Lead Levels (BLLs) in Children Consuming Recalled Cinnamon-Containing Applesauce.

What's New

As of December 29, 2023, the CDC has received a total of 287 cases of higher BLLs associated with consumption of certain cinnamon-containing apple purée and applesauce products. High BLL's have been detected by capillary, venous, or other blood lead level testing from 33 different states through their reporting structure. CDC is coordinating state and local health department efforts related to this multi-state outbreak.

Recalled Products

As of November 17, 2023, associated products include:
WanaBana brand apple cinnamon fruit purée pouches
Schnucks brand cinnamon applesauce pouches
Weis brand cinnamon applesauce pouches.

Purpose

As of January 2, 2024, the FDA is still advising the public **NOT** to buy, eat, sell, or serve recalled cinnamon-containing applesauce pouch products because they may contain lead. Parents and caregivers of children who may have consumed recalled products should contact the child's healthcare provider about getting a blood test for lead.

Lead Toxicity

Lead toxicity primarily targets the central nervous system. Children are more vulnerable to lead poisoning than adults because their nervous systems are still developing. Children also tend to absorb a higher fraction of ingested lead than adults. Although children with lead exposure may have no apparent acute symptoms, even low levels of lead have been associated with learning, behavioral, and cognitive deficits.

A child who is exposed to large amounts of lead may develop acute lead poisoning, presenting with severe neurological effects such as seizures, encephalopathy, and coma, which may result in brain damage.

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Recommendations for clinicians

1. Counsel patients or their caregivers and guardians not to eat specific cinnamon-containing apple purée or applesauce products named in the FDA recall announcements.
2. Educate patients or their caregivers and guardians about the health effects of lead exposure in children and the importance of seeking medical care.
3. Consider lead exposure in the differential diagnosis of patients presenting with compatible clinical findings associated with lead poisoning, which may include the following:
 - a. Constitutional symptoms such as generalized weakness, fatigue, malaise, arthralgias, myalgias, irritability, anorexia, insomnia, and weight loss.
 - b. Abdominal pain (“lead colic”), constipation, nausea, and other gastrointestinal symptoms.
 - c. Anemia (normochromic or microcytic, possibly with basophilic stippling).
 - d. Central nervous system effects, such as headache, impaired visual-motor coordination, tremor, and, in severe cases, seizure, encephalopathy, and coma.
 - e. Stunted growth, hearing problems, impaired neurobehavioral development, decreased intelligence, and failure to meet expected developmental milestones.
 - f. Impaired kidney function, such as acute tubular dysfunction.
4. Obtain a detailed exposure history in patients with suspected lead exposure, including those who consumed a recalled product.
5. Know that individuals with high BLLs may not be symptomatic and are identified through screening.
6. Obtain early consultation with or provide a referral to a medical toxicologist or pediatric specialist with expertise in managing lead exposure for medical workup and managing patients with high BLLs.
7. **Contact** Delaware Public Health District (DPHD) **Disease Control and Response Unit (DCRU)** to **report cases** of individuals with BLLs above the reference value, including those who have consumed these recalled products.

DCRU can be reached via secure fax at **(740) 203-2044** or by email at **DCRU@delawarehealth.org**.

This health alert was developed using information and guidance obtained from the CDC Health Alert Network released on November 13, 2023 and reviewed as of January 4, 2024.