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The Antidote

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SUBSTITUTING CADMIUM FOR LEAD

Regulators are investigating children's charm bracelets and pendants imported from China that have been shown to contain cadmium. As a heavy metal, cadmium ranks seventh on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's toxic substances priority list right behind arsenic, lead, mercury and PCBs. Cadmium is a soft, whitish metal found in the soil. It is often used in rechargeable batteries but can also be found in pigments, electroplating and plastic. The cadmium used to make jewelry becomes a poison when it is either absorbed through the skin by contact or by being transferred from a child's hands to their mouth. Cadmium is known to cause cancer in people who have inhaled or swallowed it and has been shown to hinder brain development in the very young. Cadmium is also linked to lung and kidney damage, as well as, fragile bones.

After strict guidelines for the amount of lead allowed in children's toys and jewelry were put into place, Chinese manufacturers began substituting cadmium for lead. They realized that cadmium can be obtained cheaply and that as an easily malleable substance, it can readily be substituted for lead.

Items examined in the initial investigation were found to contain very high levels of cadmium (84-91 percent by weight). These products were sold in chain stores such as Wal-Mart and Claire's in late 2009. They were also found at dollar stores in Ohio, California, New York and Texas. Wal-Mart has already pulled the suspected items off of its shelves.

For more information on specific items and stores where they were sold, please go to:
www.dispatch.com/live/content/national_world/stories/2010/01/12/toxic_jewelry_ap

DID YOU KNOW?

Diane de Poitiers, the mistress of France's King Henry II, was renowned for her youthful looks and porcelain skin. The secret to her beauty was an elixir made of gold chloride and diethyl ether she drank daily to keep herself looking young. The gold elixir was sold by apothecaries as an anti-ageing treatment which kept skin white and made hair very fine. However, over time the build up of gold and mercury from the elixir in her body poisoned her and ultimately resulted in her death.

In a recent study, Cornell University researchers found that people who used kitchen spoons to measure medicine did so inaccurately. Depending on the size of the spoon, the research subjects either poured out 8 percent too little medication or 12 percent too much medication. Taking excess medication as indicated in this study can result in a poisoning incident particularly when the medication is taken every 4-6 hours over the course of a few days. The measuring cups that often come with the medication, droppers, and syringes were found to be much more accurate for dispensing medication.

MARCH IS POISON PREVENTION MONTH

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