

KAJAL/SURMA/KOHL LEAD POISONING FAQ:



1. What is lead?

Lead is a metal found in the earth that can make people sick. Lead can be found in products including makeup like kajal/surma/kohl purchased outside the USA. When people use items that contain lead, they can get it on their bodies and in their blood, which can make them sick.

2. What is lead poisoning?

Lead poisoning is caused when someone swallows lead, breathes it in, or has it enter the body through their skin. Lead poisoning is not always easy to recognize. Signs of lead poisoning can include: headaches, stomach pain, vomiting, weakness, paleness, weight loss, learning difficulty, slowed speech development, and memory loss.

Even small amounts of lead can harm unborn babies, infants, and children by causing weight loss, behavioral and learning problems, or even death. Lead can increase the risk of miscarriages, stillbirths and early deliveries in pregnant women. Lead can also decrease a man's ability to make a woman pregnant.

Sources of lead poisoning include lead-based paint, lead-contaminated dust from paint or soil, imported or hand-made pottery with leaded glaze, some imported candies or foods, especially from Mexico, containing chili or tamarind, and imported cosmetics such as kajal/surma/kohl.

Lead poisoning is treatable. It is important to call your doctor if you think you or a loved one may have lead poisoning.

3. How would my child get lead poisoning from kajal/surma/kohl?

Kajal/surma/kohl purchased outside the USA may contain lead. When you put it on your child's eyes, face, and/or feet, lead enters the body through the skin and eyes and makes her or him sick.

If you use kajal/surma/kohl purchased outside of the USA, you can also absorb lead through your skin. This can make you sick, and, if you are pregnant, can also harm your unborn baby.

- 4. If someone in my family has worn or used kajal/surma/kohl from outside the USA. What should I do?**
Immediately stop your use of the kajal/surma/kohl from outside the USA to protect you and your loved ones from additional lead contact. Place any unused kajal/surma/kohl in a sealed plastic bag and call the Arlington County Hazardous Materials office at 703-228-6832 to learn how to best throw away the eyeliner. The Hazardous Materials office is open Monday-Saturday from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.

Thoroughly wash hands and any other body parts that may have come in contact with kajal/surma/kohl. Wash household surfaces that the lead touched, like countertops or sinks with wet, disposable towels. Simply dusting the surface will spread the lead around.

Ask a doctor to test children as well as pregnant or nursing women for lead poisoning if they have used kajal/surma/kohl from outside the USA. People can be sick with lead poisoning, but not seem ill, so it is important to get a blood test and to keep all follow-up appointments.

- 5. It is important for me to use kajal/surma/kohl in my culture. What should I do if I want to continue these traditions?**

These traditions are very important. We recommend that you only use lead-free kajal/surma/kohl that you can buy in American stores. It is available at stores like Amazon.com, CVS, Target, or Walgreens. Some of the brands include: L'Oreal, Maybelline, Milani, Revlon, and Rimmel. Most are described as “kohl eyeliner” or “kajal eyeliner”. These products do not contain lead and are safe to use.



- 6. Where can I learn more?**

To learn more about lead poisoning and kajal/surma/kohl, visit:

<http://www.fda.gov/Cosmetics/ProductsIngredients/Products/ucm137250.htm> and

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/leadsafe/>. You can also call the Virginia Lead Safe Program at 877-668-7987.

If you think you or a loved one may have been exposed to lead then call your doctor immediately.