



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Thomas R. Frieden, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

Kohl, Kajal and Surma Products Containing Lead

This fact sheet provides information about imported kohl, kajal and surma products found to contain high levels of lead.

What are kohl, kajal and surma?

Kohl, kajal and surma are eye cosmetics imported from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Some of these products contain lead. Some people using these products have suffered lead poisoning.

Why is lead dangerous?

Lead is a poisonous metal that can damage the brain, nervous system, reproductive system, kidneys and other parts of the body. Children and pregnant women who use products containing lead are especially at risk.

How does lead from kohl, kajal or surma get into the body?

When a person uses these products, some of the kohl, kajal or surma can get onto the hands. The user may then ingest the lead through hand-to-mouth contact. Some lead may also be absorbed through the eyes.

Which types of kohl, kajal and surma contain lead?

There are many varieties and manufacturers of kohl, kajal and surma. Any of them can contain lead. Recently, the New York City Health Department found the following products to be contaminated:

- *Hashmi Surma Special*, made in Pakistan
- *Hashmi Kajal*, made in Pakistan
- *Hashmi Kohl Aswad*, made in Pakistan
- "Pure Kohl From the Waters of ZamZam"

How can I know if my kohl, kajal or surma contains lead?

It is difficult for users of these products to tell the difference between safe and dangerous brands. A product may contain high levels of lead even if lead is not listed as an ingredient on the label.

What should I do if I have used kohl, kajal or surma?

- **Immediately** stop using these products.
- Call a physician to request a blood test for lead.
- Keep products away from children.
- Call **311** or **212 POISONS (212-764-7667)** for more information about lead in kohl, kajal or surma. Interpretation services are available.