

Lead Alert



Health Hazards Of Lead-Glazed Pottery



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL
5109 LEESBURG PIKE
FALLS CHURCH, VA 22041-3258



SGPS-PSP (40)

31 DEC 1990

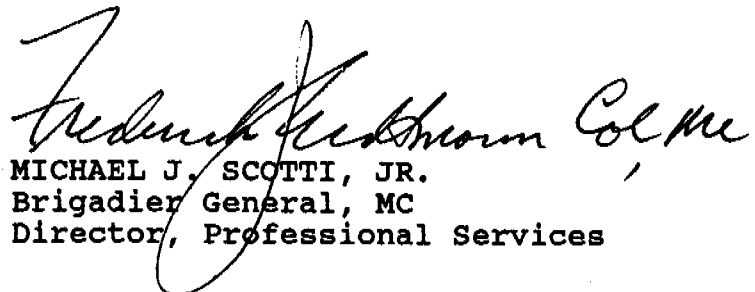
MEMORANDUM FOR PREVENTIVE MEDICINE OFFICERS

SUBJECT: Lead-Glazed Pottery

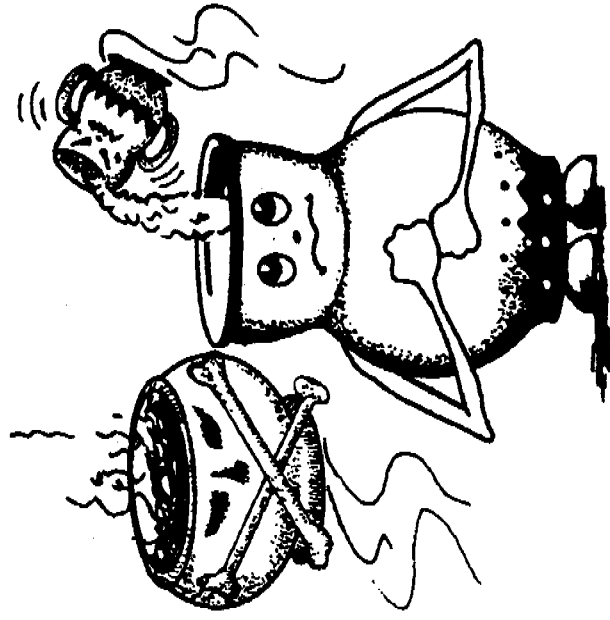
1. The use of improperly made pottery and ceramics for storage of foods and beverages may be a potential source of lead. When assigned to foreign countries, Army personnel may inadvertently purchase improperly lead-glazed items off post. Improperly lead-glazed items may even be purchased at garage sales and flea markets in the United States.
2. Enclosed is a technical guide prepared by the U.S. Army Environmental Hygiene Agency providing information on the problems associated with lead leaching from pottery and ceramic ware.
3. The technical guide contains a brochure and press releases for your use. The brochure can be reproduced locally and should be incorporated into local consumer educational programs. We also recommend distribution of the brochure in welcome packets for overseas commands, for day care centers, and for PX outlets.
4. The press releases can be used by installation public affairs offices to make the public aware of possible lead-leachings.
5. Point of contact for this office is LTC Homer Emery, AUTOVON 289-0812 or commercial (703) 756-0812.

FOR THE SURGEON GENERAL:

Encl
as

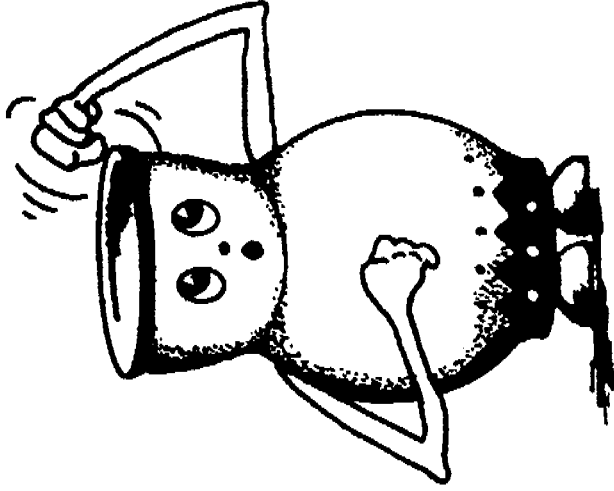
for 
MICHAEL J. SCOTTI, JR.
Brigadier General, MC
Director, Professional Services

| Lead Alert

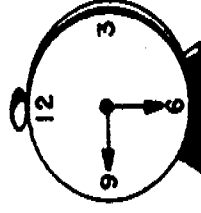
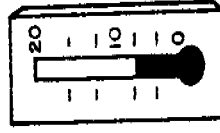


| Health Hazards of Lead-Glazed Pottery

What Makes Pottery Poisonous?



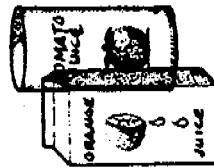
The same elements that give ceramic pottery the shiny, smooth surface and vivid color, can also POISON you. These elements are the metals LEAD and CADMIUM, which can be toxic to humans. They have been used in pottery glazes since the beginning of civilization. Lead reduces the temperature required to fire the pottery, and cadmium enhances the color. Not every piece of pottery that is glazed with these metals is poisonous, but ...



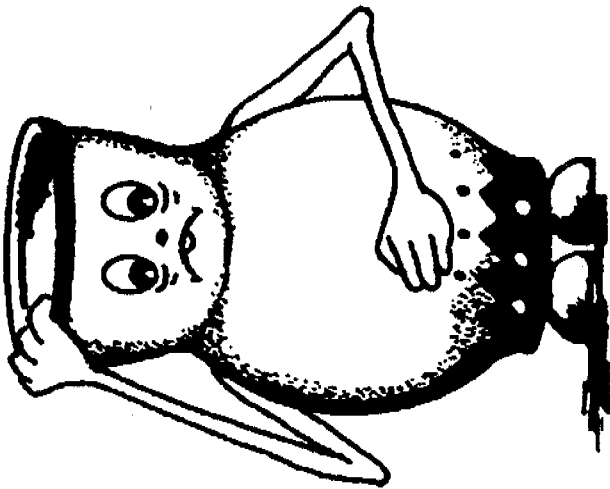
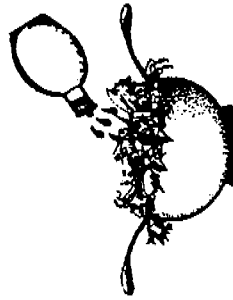
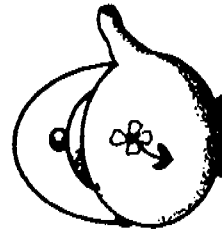
if pottery is not fired at a high enough temperature, for a sufficient amount of time when it is manufactured ... the LEAD and CADMIUM can contaminate any food or beverage that you prepare, store, or serve in the pottery.

How?

The natural acids in foods and beverages dissolve the glaze, and the food absorbs the metals. The more you use the piece of pottery to hold foods and beverages, the more the glaze will dissolve. These foods and beverages dissolve the glaze very quickly:



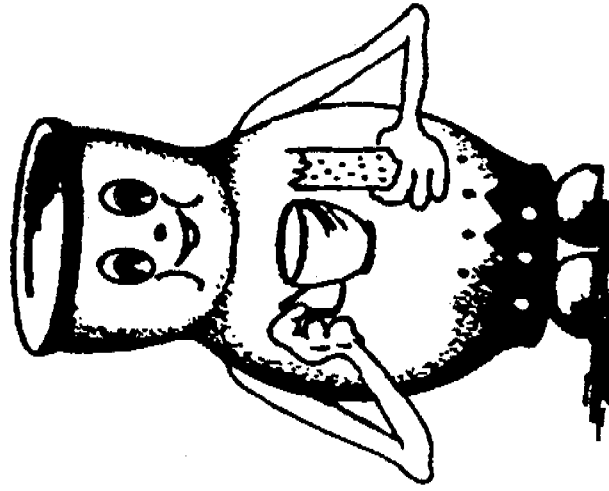
- ◆ tea
- ◆ orange juice
- ◆ tomato juice
- ◆ salad dressing
- ◆ wine
- ◆ coffee
- ◆ gelatin dessert



How Harmful Is It To Eat From This Pottery?

Besides acidic foods, washing and scouring the "lead-glazed pottery" will also wear away the glaze and increase the release of lead. Serving, preparing, or storing food in lead-glazed pottery once or twice will not cause death. If you continue to use it for food every day, you will build up toxic metals in your body every day. The metals accumulate in your bones and kidneys and can eventually cause serious diseases of the . . .

- ◆ Nervous system
- ◆ Reproductive system
- ◆ Kidney
- ◆ Blood
- ◆ Cardiovascular system
- ◆ Gastrointestinal system



**LEAD POISONING IS SERIOUS . . .
SEE YOUR DOCTOR**

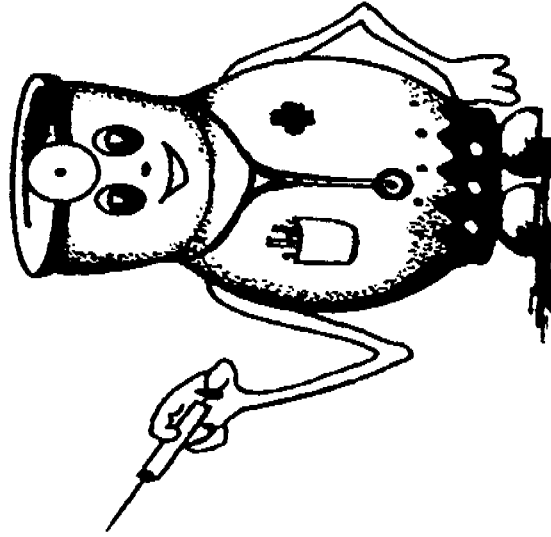
Beware Of These Symptoms Of Lead Poisoning . . .

EARLY SYMPTOMS

- ◆ fatigue
- ◆ headaches
- ◆ muscle pains
- ◆ joint pains
- ◆ loss of appetite
- ◆ moodiness and irritability
- ◆ difficulty sleeping
- ◆ stomach discomfort
- ◆ constipation or diarrhea
- ◆ sweet metallic taste in the mouth

LATER SYMPTOMS

- ◆ acute crampy abdominal pain
- ◆ vomiting
- ◆ loss of interest in daily activities
- ◆ increased irritability and aggression

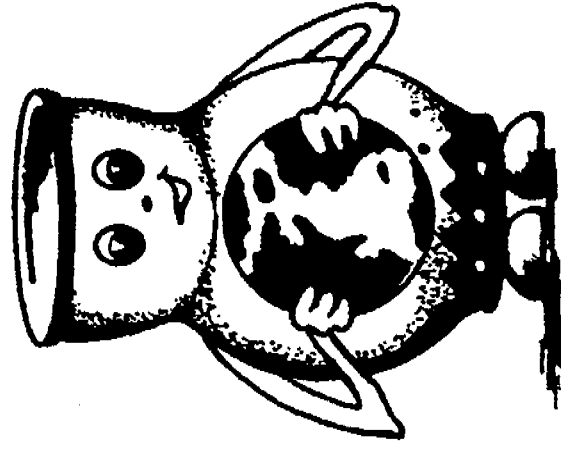


All of these symptoms can lead to a misdiagnosis, since they are shared by many illnesses.

But Who Manufactures "Lead-Glazed" Pottery?

"Lead-glazed pottery" is made all over the world and sold anywhere from the most primitive village markets to exclusive department stores. Most of this pottery has been manufactured in these countries ...

- ◆ Italy
- ◆ Spain
- ◆ Greece
- ◆ Portugal
- ◆ Mexico
- ◆ The Netherlands
- ◆ India
- ◆ Pakistan
- ◆ Macao
- ◆ North Korea
- ◆ The People's Republic of China
- ◆ Thailand

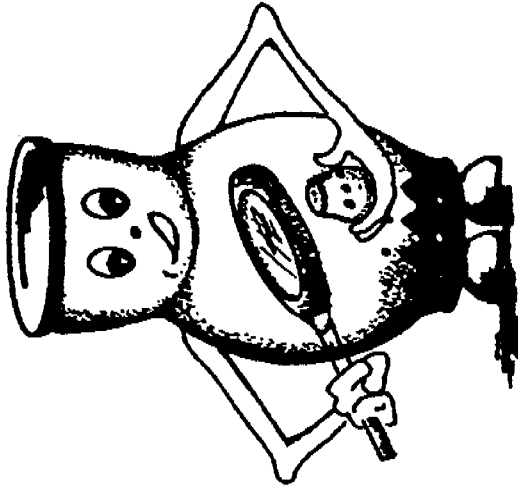


Pottery manufactured in countries other than those listed above may also be poisonous. Anyone, anywhere, can fire pottery improperly in a primitive or obsolete kiln.

How Does "Lead-Glazed" Pottery Look?

"Lead-glazed pottery" that is new, or that has not been used to contain food, will not have any distinguishing characteristics. But, after extended use, beware of these signs which may indicate glaze deterioration:

-
- ◆ *Frosty Appearance*
 - ◆ *Rainbow-like Sheen*
 - ◆ *Visible Flaking*
-



The absence of these signs does not mean that the pottery is safe to use. **DO NOT USE POTTERY TO STORE FOOD UNLESS YOU ARE SURE IT IS NOT CONTAMINATED WITH LEAD.**

Protect Yourself And Your Family . . .

In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has routinely sampled and tested foreign and domestic pottery for lead since 1971. When violations are discovered, the FDA can take action to protect the public health.

For service personnel, the Army and Air Force Exchange System (AAFES) administers a similar program. The AAFES program not only includes sampling and testing, but also provides quality control checks of manufacturing facilities.

The "lead-glazed pottery" threat is greatest in overseas countries. If you visit or are stationed outside the continental United States ...

- ◆ Be cautious when purchasing pottery made by amateurs or hobbyists.
- ◆ Do not store food in pottery made by amateurs or hobbyists unless you are sure that it was manufactured properly.
- ◆ To be completely sure your pottery is safe, buy these items from the AAFES outlet.

Lead Alert: Sample Press Release For Local Media

Drinking or eating from pottery glazed with lead can cause lead poisoning, according to Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials, if the pottery has not been fired for a sufficient amount of time and at the proper temperature when it was manufactured.

The natural acids in foods and beverages, like juice, coffee, tea or wine, dissolve the glaze and allow foods and beverages to absorb the lead. The consumption of these lead-tainted foods allows the heavy metal to accumulate in the bones and kidneys, and this buildup can cause damage to the body.

Distinct symptoms of lead poisoning do not exist. Since signs of lead poisoning, such as fatigue, headaches, muscle pains, stomach discomfort, a sweet metallic taste in the mouth, acute abdominal pain, and vomiting are similar to other health problems, lead poisoning is often misdiagnosed.

The lead-glazed pottery may not have any distinguishing characteristics, but extended use may bring about a frosty appearance, a rainbow-like sheen or visible flaking.

The FDA randomly tests pottery imported into the U.S. for sale. The results of an FDA inspection conducted in 1987 determined that 16 percent of 811 samples were hazardous for food use, because the amount of lead released from each piece exceeded FDA restrictions. The FDA can not test all pottery found in the U.S. because many visitors and tourists also bring hazardous pottery into the U.S.

Lead-glazed pottery is a greater health threat to people living overseas, where most of the improperly glazed pottery is manufactured in outdated or handmade kilns. According to local Preventive Medicine officials, people overseas should be aware of these hazards before purchasing locally produced pottery.

If you suspect that pottery contains lead, the FDA advises that you do not use it to store or hold food. An excellent booklet titled "Lead Alert: Health Hazards of Lead-Glazed Pottery" is available from (Insert local source of booklet).

Lead Alert: Sample Press Release For Local Media

When living or traveling overseas, we Americans often worry about whether our American stomachs can handle the foreign foods. We have all heard the phrase, "While in Mexico, don't drink the water." Yet, it is not always the food that makes us ill, but the pottery on which the food is served.

In some countries, people often fire their pottery in handmade or outdated kilns. If pottery is not fired at the right temperature and for a sufficient amount of time, the lead used in the pottery glaze may be released into your foods and beverages.

When food touches this improperly glazed pottery, the natural food acids dissolve the glaze, and the food absorbs the lead. Then, the consumption of this lead causes a buildup of lead in the body, which can lead to lead poisoning or even death.

The (Insert local Preventive Medicine Activity name) is promoting a public awareness campaign, "Lead Alert," to warn U.S. citizens overseas about lead-glazed pottery. According to Preventive Medicine officials, people should not use pottery to store food unless they are sure that it is lead-free.

An excellent booklet titled "Lead Alert: Health Hazards of Lead-Glazed Pottery" is available from (Insert local source of booklet).

Lead Alert: Sample Press Release For Local Media

(Fill in Preventive Medicine Officer's Name) warns soldiers and DA civilians about the dangers of lead-glazed pottery. Many foreign countries manufacture their pottery using outdated methods. If the pottery is not fired correctly, then the lead used in the glaze may leach into your foods.

Using unsafe pottery can lead to serious illnesses. You may not feel the effect of a lead buildup immediately, but lead poisoning can be very dangerous.

(Fill in Preventive Medicine Officer's Name) says personnel living in or visiting foreign countries bring lead-glazed pottery back with them. He asks you to be very careful about storing or serving food in your pottery. Certain foods enhance this problem, such as coffee, tea or orange juice.

An excellent booklet titled "Lead Alert: Health Hazards of Lead-Glazed Pottery" is available from (Insert local source of booklet).

Lead Alert: References and Resources

"Ceramic Ware Recalled," FDA Consumer, July - August 1988, p.2.

"Decorative Ceramicware," FDA Talk Paper T88-54, August 5, 1988.

"FDA Efforts to Reduce Lead Levels in Food," FDA Talk Paper T88-53, August 5, 1988.

"Lead in Ceramic Ware," FDA Drug Bulletin, November 1988, p.31-32.

"Lead in Native Pottery," FDA Talk Paper T85-17, March 13, 1985.

Lecos, Chris W. "Pretty Poison: Lead and Ceramic Ware," FDA Consumer, July - August 1987, p.6-8.

"Mystery Poisonings Traced to Lead in Cups, Glasses," FDA Consumer, July - August 1987, p.9.

"Reduce Your Risk of Lead Poisoning," FDA Consumer, July - August 1987, p. 9.

Wallace, Kalman and Bird. "Hazardous Lead Release from Glazed Dinnerware: A Cautionary Note," The Science of the Total Environment, September 1985, Vol 44, No 3, pp.289-292.

Warrick, S. "Health Agency: Pentagon, Should Warn of Lead Dangers," Army Times, July 25, 1988, p.18.

Warrick, S. "Pottery in Exchanges Not Monitored by FDA; Navy Agencies Differ," Army Times, July 25, 1988, p.18.

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