

Sources of Lead in Food



Tennessee Department
of Health

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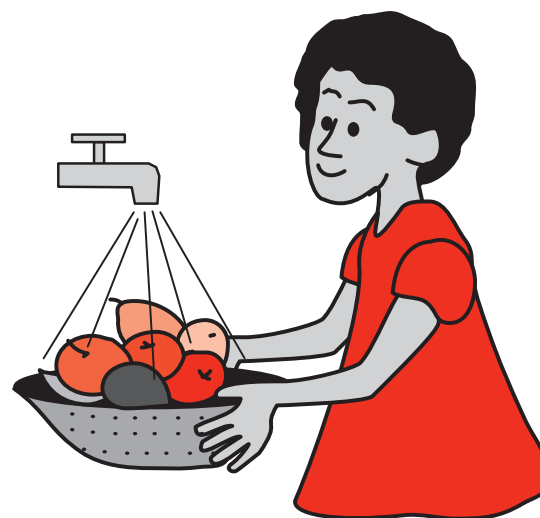
SP 605-G

Sometimes, the food we eat can be a source for lead poisoning. To make sure you are not adding lead to your food, do not store food in open cans, especially imported cans. Do not store or serve food in pottery – it is only for decorative use. Do not eat or drink food or beverages in lead crystal.

Food products from other countries may have higher levels of lead. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets strict limits for the lead content for products made or sold in the United States. An example of an imported food that can be high in lead is tamarind and chili candies. These candies and wrappers may be imported from Mexico. Their wrappers may have as much as 25 times the acceptable level of lead allowed by the FDA. This lead leaches from the wrappers into the candy. A child may also absorb lead through the skin while handling the wrappers or may absorb lead through his or her gastrointestinal tract by eating the candies.

Fruits and vegetables that you raise in your home garden may contain lead if grown in lead-contaminated soil. This lead can be consumed when eating the fruits and vegetables. Lead may also be found in plants sprayed with insecticides containing lead. The following are a few steps that you can do to reduce the risk:

- Test the soil to be sure there is not a lead problem. If lead is found, find another location for the garden or replace the soil.
- Do not raise or eat fruits and vegetables grown along roadways or near house foundations. The soil near roads and near the home can contain lead in high concentrations due to lead-based paint or leaded gasoline.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables carefully and thoroughly to remove all soil. Be sure that the soil is washed down the drain, so the lead does not contaminate other food in the kitchen.





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