



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Calabash Chalk Containing Lead and Arsenic

This fact sheet provides information about Calabash Chalk, a remedy, found to contain lead and arsenic.



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What is Calabash Chalk?

Calabash Chalk is a West African remedy used to treat morning sickness during pregnancy. It is also known as *Calabash Clay*, *Nzu*, *Poto*, *Calabar Stone*, *Ndom*, *Mabele*, *Argile* or *La Craie*. It may be sold as large pellets or in bulk and can resemble balls of clay or mud. It may be packaged in a clear plastic bag with or without labeling. This product has been found to contain lead and arsenic.

How can lead affect my health?

Lead is a toxic metal, of particular concern for children and pregnant women. Lead poisoning can cause problems in pregnancy and learning and behavior problems in young children. Long-term effects of lead can include nervous system disorders and brain damage.

How can arsenic affect my health?

Arsenic is also a poisonous metal. People with long term exposures to arsenic may have an increased risk for cancer, skin lesions, eye irritation, and nervous system effects.

What should I do if I have used this product?

- Immediately stop using these products.
- Call your doctor to request a blood-lead test.
- Keep products away from children.
- If you suspect you may have been poisoned, call the Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS (764-7667) or 212-VENENOS (836-3667) for Spanish speakers.

How can I get more information?

Call 311 for more information or to report locations where these products are sold.