How can I find out if my dishware is safe?

If the dishware is sold at a major retail store, ask the salesperson or customer service if the dishes meet California Proposition 65 regulations. You can also contact the manufacturer directly. The only way to find out how much lead is in your dishware is to send it to a laboratory for testing. This is expensive and may damage the dishware.

Some people use color-change test kits, available at hardware stores, to check for lead. The test kits do not tell you the exact amount of lead in the dish. If lead is beneath the surface of the dish, the test kits will not detect it. If the test kit is positive, the dish should not be used for food or drinks. A negative result does not ensure that the dish is safe.

Is there a way to remove lead from my ceramic dishware?

No. Many people use various traditional methods to "cure" dishware believing that it will also remove the lead. Some methods include boiling the dishware in water or in water with an acidic substance (e.g., vinegar or lemon), washing the dishware with bleach, and rubbing it with garlic and salt. These traditional "curing" methods will **not** eliminate lead in dishware.

Keep your family safe—don't use dishware with lead for cooking, serving, or storing food or drinks. Keep it away from children. Enjoy the color and beauty of your dishware by using it for decoration. Also, remember that lead is found in other sources such as home remedies, candies, and toys. Ask your doctor to test your children for lead.

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Lead
in Traditional Ceramic Dishware

WARNING

Traditional ceramic dishware is beautiful and brings the culture and art of Mexico, China, and of other places into your home.

But some dishware contains harmful lead. Because it is hard to know which pots or dishes have lead, be careful when using traditional ceramic dishware for cooking, serving, or storing food or drinks.

What is lead?

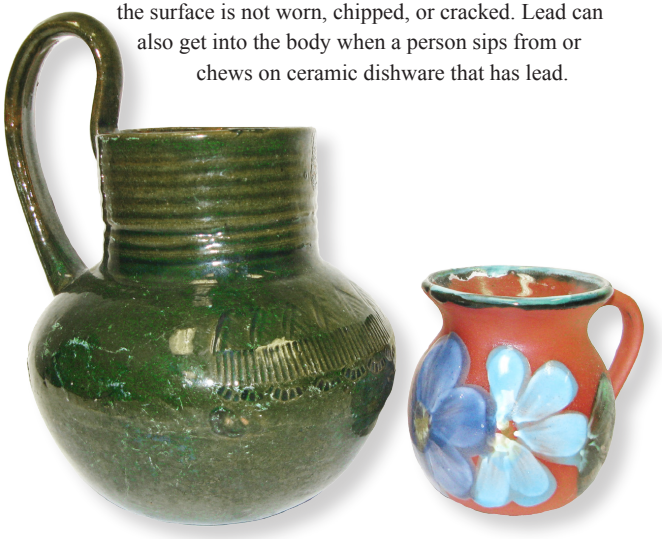
Lead is a metal found in the environment. Lead is a poison that can harm the brain, kidneys, and other organs in the body. Children and pregnant women are most at risk. Lead can make it hard for children to learn and behave properly. The most common sources of lead exposure are old paint, soil, and house dust. Lead has also been found in other products, such as some home remedies, candies, and toys.

Why is there lead in some ceramic dishware?

Lead can be in the glaze or painted decoration of ceramic dishware. Glaze makes dishware smooth and shiny, and makes some colors brighter. You cannot see lead in the glaze or paint. Even if the dishware isn't decorated, the glaze may have lead.

How does lead get from dishware into your body?

If ceramic dishware is not manufactured according to strict regulations, lead in the glaze or decoration can contaminate any food or drink that is put in the dishware; this is called leaching. When you eat the food, the lead gets into your body. The longer the food cooks or is stored in the dishware, the more lead gets into the food. Acidic foods (e.g., salsa, citrus fruits, tomatoes, and salad dressing) and drinks (e.g., citrus fruit juices, sodas, alcoholic beverages, coffee, and tea) leach lead out of dishes much faster than non-acid foods. When dishes get worn and old, they can leach more lead. But lead leaching can happen even if the surface is not worn, chipped, or cracked. Lead can also get into the body when a person sips from or chews on ceramic dishware that has lead.



What kinds of ceramic dishware are more likely to have lead?

- Highly decorated traditional dishware from Mexico, China, and other places;
- Dishware that is old, worn, chipped, or cracked;
- Dishware made by small-scale artisans, especially those located outside the U.S.;
- Dishware sold by street vendors or at flea markets.

My relatives and friends have been using this type of dishware for years. Why hasn't anyone gotten sick?

Lead can cause serious health problems. But most children who are poisoned by lead do not look or act sick. The only way to know if your child has lead poisoning is to get a special blood test for lead. The test is free or low cost.

Are there any laws against selling dishware that has lead?

US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has laws about lead in ceramic dishware. California has an even stricter law requiring that ceramic dishware that has lead must have a special "Proposition 65" warning.