



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **State Health Department Warns North Dakotans About Lead Contamination in Certain Candy Products Imported From Mexico**

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakotans should avoid eating chili-based candy imported from Mexico, according to State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. Many of these products contain high levels of lead that can cause serious health problems for infants, young children and pregnant women – including learning disabilities and behavioral disorders that last a lifetime.

The North Dakota Department of Health recently learned that some residents of the state have received the imported Mexican candy from friends and relatives. In addition to Mexico, the candy also is sold in California, Arizona, Texas and other southern border states.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), imported Mexican candy and other products containing significant amounts of chili powder may contain high levels of lead. Examples of chili-containing products include lollipops coated with chili and salt, as well as lemon/lime and chili seasoning sold as a snack pack. The chili contained in these products is different from the chili used to season Mexican food.

Recent analysis by the FDA of a number of Mexican candies found as much as 0.3 to 0.4 micrograms of lead per gram of product. The FDA recommends that children younger than 6 should not consume more than 6.0 micrograms of lead each day from all food sources. Because of the large size of these candies, which may be more than 30 grams in weight per piece, a young child eating one piece could ingest nearly twice the daily limit of lead.

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The FDA has placed two specific Mexican candies on its “Import Alert”: Chaca Chaca candy and Tamarind candy.

- **Chaca Chaca** is a brownish-red fruit pulp bar coated with salt and chili powder. The candy is sold in packages of several small individually wrapped strips that often include a picture of a locomotive on the wrapper.
- **Tamarind** candy may contain lead from chili powder and may become more contaminated if it is sold in glazed ceramic vessels that release lead from the glaze into the candy.

Pregnant women and parents of children who may have consumed candy originating in Mexico may want to contact their health-care providers. Any candy containing chili powder from Mexico should be discarded. The public is encouraged to report any sellers of the candy by calling the North Dakota Department of Health at 701.328.5188.

For more information about lead poisoning, visit the department’s Lead-based Paint Program website at [www.health.state.nd.us/ndhd/envIRON/ee/rad/lbp/](http://www.health.state.nd.us/ndhd/envIRON/ee/rad/lbp/) or call 701.328.5188.

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