



TO: West Virginia Healthcare Providers, Hospitals and Other Healthcare Facilities

FROM: Matthew Christiansen, MD, MPH - Commissioner and State Health Officer
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health

DATE: November 15, 2023

LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS: Please distribute to community health providers, hospital-based physicians, infection control preventionists, laboratory directors and other applicable partners.

OTHER RECIPIENTS: Please distribute to association members, staff, etc.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a [Health Alert](#) on November 13, 2023 following multiple states reporting potential cases of high blood lead levels (BLLs) in children consuming [recalled cinnamon-containing applesauce](#). As of November 7, 2023, there have been 22 cases reported in 14 states, with no cases reported in West Virginia. Stores in West Virginia affected by this recall include Dollar Tree, Weis grocery store, Amazon and other online outlets.

Case ages ranging from 1 to 3 years with BLLs from 4 to 29 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). Reported signs and symptoms included headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, change in activity level and anemia. Children with high BLLs may not be symptomatic, and case finding may be mainly from reporting by clinicians who recognize risks of exposure and perform lead screening. No safe level of lead in children's blood has been identified. The CDC and West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health (BPH) uses a blood lead reference value of $3.5 \mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ to identify children with BLLs that are higher than most children's levels. Lead exposure may cause behavioral, developmental and health problems even at low levels in the blood. Because children under the age of 6 are undergoing critical neurological and physical development, they are especially vulnerable to the adverse effects of lead on the body.

BPH is issuing this advisory to inform healthcare providers to consider the possibility of illness due to lead exposure and to report any suspected cases to their local health department. The following are recommendations for providers:

1. Counsel patients and families to not eat specific cinnamon-containing apple puree or applesauce products named in the [recall](#).
2. Educate patients and families about the health effects of lead exposure in children and the importance of seeking medical care. Most children have no obvious symptoms, but appropriate screening can detect lead in blood.

This message was directly distributed by the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health to local health departments and professional associations. Receiving entities are responsible for further disseminating the information as appropriate to the target audience.

Categories of Health Alert messages:

Health Alert: Conveys the highest level of importance. Warrants immediate action or attention.

Health Advisory: Provides important information for a specific incident or situation. May not require immediate action.

Health Update: Provides updated information regarding an incident or situation. Unlikely to require immediate action.

3. Consider lead exposure on the differential diagnosis of patients presenting with compatible clinical findings associated with lead poisoning.
4. Test children who have consumed a recalled applesauce pouch for lead exposure. **All blood lead tests are required to be reported to the BPH within seven business days following receipt of laboratory findings.** Providers who use a laboratory e.g., LabCorp, to determine blood lead levels do not need to send the lead results. A blood lead report form can be found [here](#).
5. Comply with West Virginia's Childhood Lead Screening Rule by screening all children at one year and again at two years of age, and children 36 to 72 months of age if they have not been previously screened during their well child visit.
6. For follow-up and case management guidance, healthcare providers may access the [WV Childhood Lead poisoning guidelines](#).

Additional Resources:

WV Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program:

<https://dhhr.wv.gov/wvchildhoodleadpoisoning/Pages/default.aspx#acc1>

FDA Investigation of Elevated Lead Levels: Cinnamon Applesauce Pouches:

<https://www.fda.gov/food/outbreaks-foodborne-illness/investigation-elevated-lead-levels-cinnamon-applesauce-pouches-november-2023>

CDC Health Effects of Lead Exposure:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/prevention/health-effects.htm>



Recalled product photos: <https://www.fda.gov/safety/recalls-market-withdrawals-safety-alerts/wanabana-issues-voluntary-recall-wanabana-apple-cinnamon-fruit-puree-pouches-due-elevated-lead>

For questions about this Health Advisory, contact the WV Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at (304) 558-5388 or toll-free at 1 (800) 642-8522.

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