

# LEAD IN CERAMICS AND POTTERY



**Lead is a highly toxic metal.** It is especially harmful for young children because they are still growing and developing. Exposure to lead can lead to many different health issues, such as:

- Brain and nervous system damage
- Slowed growth and development
- Hearing and speech problems
- Learning and behavior issues



FDA

**Unfortunately, many items can contain lead. Even items you might not expect, including glazed pottery and ceramics.** Lead can be found in the glaze or decorations on the surface of some traditional pottery and ceramics. Leaded glazes are used on some ceramic products because it adds color and a bright finish. Food can become contaminated with lead if it is prepared, served, or stored in pottery or ceramics that contain lead.



**What kinds of ceramics or pottery are most likely to contain lead?**

- Items with bright colors, like red, orange, or yellow
- Items sold at flea markets or by street vendors
- Items that are old, worn, or chipped
- Antique items

**Enjoy the beauty of traditional pottery and ceramicware while staying lead-safe:**

- Do not prepare, serve, or store food in pottery or ceramics. Use these items for decoration instead.
- Highly acidic foods (like tomatoes, fruit juices, and alcohol) can cause more lead to leach from the glaze. Do not prepare, serve, or store any of these foods in pottery or ceramics.
- Remember that washing and boiling will not remove lead from the glaze.
- Ask a health care provider to give your child a blood lead test if you have been using ceramics or pottery to prepare, serve, or store food.



Learn more:  
[www.vdh.virginia.gov/leadsafe/](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/leadsafe/)

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Virginia Childhood Lead  
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