



Centers for Disease Control
and Prevention (CDC)
Atlanta GA 30341-3724

April 17, 2008

Mark J. Feldman, D.M.D. and James B. Bramson, D.D.S.
American Dental Association
1111 14th Street NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Drs. Feldman and Bramson:

Thank you for your correspondence regarding media reports about the lead content in a dental prosthesis made in a dental laboratory in China. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) became aware of this issue through conversations with staff at the American Dental Association's (ADA) Divisions of Science and Government and Public Affairs and through media interest in this story. As you indicated, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has regulatory authority over dental products, including dental prosthetic materials, and for the registration of foreign laboratories that import dental products into the United States. It is our understanding that the FDA already is acting on this information. At this time, CDC has had no formal request for any type of engagement from a state or local health authority.

CDC assists state and local lead poisoning prevention programs to provide a scientific basis for policy decisions to ensure that health issues are addressed in decisions about the environment. In addition, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), as directed by congressional mandate, also performs specific functions concerning the effect on public health of various hazardous substances in the environment, including lead.

Although CDC has no specific information regarding the case to which you refer, we can provide you with some general information on lead and lead exposure. Many consumer products contain lead in trace amounts, and federal regulations limit the amount of lead in consumer products. Those levels are established based on both the way the body absorbs lead, the potential hazard, and the lead level product manufacturers can achieve using good manufacturing practices given the level of ambient lead contamination. If a person is exposed to lead, many factors will determine whether he/she will be harmed, including the dose, the duration, and how that person came in contact with the material. In making such a determination, one also must consider any other chemical exposure(s) and the overall state of health of that individual. Certainly, CDC recommends against the unnecessary use of lead in consumer products, including dental crowns.

The recent media reports of lead in dental porcelain/metal crowns suggest a level of approximately 200 parts per million. Such small amounts of lead as reported, however, are extremely unlikely to cause adverse health effects in adults because the dental products wear out slowly, so the lead would be released in tiny amounts over time. Even if released at an increased rate, it is highly unlikely that this amount would be a health risk to an adult.

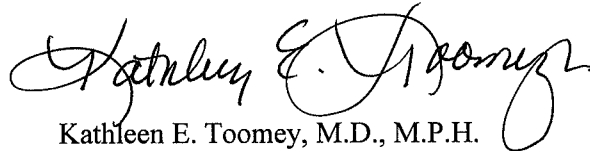
Given the current information, CDC does not recommend that individuals defer needed oral procedures or have existing prostheses removed. Individuals who are concerned that they may have been exposed to hazardous lead levels, particularly those with occupational or other high dose exposures to lead, should be referred to a physician or health department for a blood lead test. A blood lead test is a relatively straightforward medical procedure covered by Medicaid and most health insurance companies.

Page 2 – Mark J. Feldman, D.M.D. and James B. Bramson, D.D.S.
American Dental Association

It is our understanding that testing for potential leaching of lead from these products is being conducted in ADA laboratories. CDC would be happy to assist ADA in interpreting the health impact of the testing of dental porcelains/metals that is currently underway. CDC also will provide any support if requested from the FDA, as that agency conducts further testing of these products.

As the director for the Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, which oversees the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion's Division of Oral Health, and on behalf of the Coordinating Center for Environmental Health and Injury Prevention, I would like to thank you for your concern for the health of both dental health care workers and the American public. If we can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Kathleen E. Toomey, M.D., M.P.H.
Director, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

cc:

Julie Gerberding, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and
Administrator, Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
Henry Falk, M.D., M.P.H., Director, Coordinating Center for Environmental Health and Injury
Prevention
Howard Frumkin, M.D., Dr.P.H., Director, National Center for Environmental Health
Janet Collins, Ph.D., Director, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health
Promotion
William Maas, D.D.S., M.P.H., Director, Division of Oral Health