

Surma Can Poison Children

“My daughter was poisoned by surma. We couldn’t even tell she was sick. A doctor tested her blood for lead. I thought surma was healthy because it is natural. Now I know it has lead, which hurts children.” - Afghan Refugee

Lead is a Poison

- Most surma that is from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East has lead. People have used surma for a long time. Now we know it is dangerous.
- Many children across the United States have tested high for lead from using surma. Surma is also called “ranja,” “kohl,” “kajal,” “gajal,” “kahal,” or “al-kahal.”
- Lead can poison the brain and make it hard for children to **learn, pay attention, and behave.**

Baby with surma around eyes



Source: Rolf Klemm, Johns Hopkins University

Lead can get into the eyes and mouth and poison children

Do Not Use

Do not use surma products like these. They may have high amounts of lead in them.



Use Safer Products

Use products from the USA or Europe such as “Kajal” by Maybelline and “Infallible” by L’Oréal.



Get a lead test

- Ask your doctor for a lead test for your child.
- Getting a lead test is the only way to know if someone has lead poisoning.

For more information

Call (866) 827-3478 or Email: pehsu@ucsf.edu
Western States Pediatric Environmental Health
Specialty Unit (WSPEHSU)