



Are You Eating Toxic Chocolate? Lead Found in Trader Joe's, Hershey's and Other Chocolates

Mar. 26, 2016 12:40PM EST

Consumer health watchdog [As You Sow](#) released results Wednesday showing that 35 of 50 chocolate products tested, including chocolate bunnies and eggs, [expose consumers to lead and cadmium](#) above levels set by California's [Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act](#).



Testing commissioned by [As You Sow](#), and conducted at independent laboratories, indicates that the chocolate products contain [lead](#) and/or cadmium, and they fail to provide the legally required warning to consumers.

"Lead exposure is associated with neurological impairment, such as learning disabilities and decreased IQ, even at very low levels. In fact, there is no safe level of lead for children," said Eleanne van Vliet, MPH, [As You Sow's](#) environmental health consultant.

[As You Sow](#) has filed legal notices against chocolate manufacturers, including Trader Joe's, Hershey's, Green and Black's, Lindt, [Whole Foods](#), Kroger, Godiva, See's Candies, Mars, Theo Chocolate, Equal Exchange, Ghirardelli, Earth Circle Organics and more, for failure to warn of lead and/or cadmium in their chocolate products.

"As underscored by the [Flint disaster](#), humans have contaminated our environment with lead, and now we must do everything in our power to protect ourselves and children, who are the most vulnerable of us, from every possible exposure," said [Sean Palfrey, MD](#), a pediatrician and professor of pediatrics and public health at Boston University School of Medicine. "Young children and pregnant women especially should avoid exposure to lead."

Scientists have linked chronic cadmium exposure to kidney, liver and bone damage in humans. Children are more susceptible to especially susceptible to even from low doses over time. Animal studies associate cadmium exposure with decreased birth weight, neurobehavioral problems and male reproductive harm.

Recent revelations of lead contamination in water in Flint, Michigan raised awareness that lead is irrefutably linked to neurological impacts in children. Since 1992, [As You Sow](#) has led enforcement actions resulting in removal of lead from children's jewelry and formaldehyde from portable classrooms.

"Lead and cadmium accumulate in the body, so avoiding exposure is important, especially for children," explained [Danielle Fugere](#), [As You Sow](#) president. "Our goal is to work with chocolate manufacturers to find ways to avoid these metals in their products."