



Calabash Chalk: Lead and Arsenic in Remedy for Morning Sickness

What is Calabash Chalk?



Calabash Chalk is a West African remedy used to treat morning sickness during pregnancy. It is also known as *Calabash Clay*, *Nzu*, *Poto*, *Calabar Stone*, *Ndom*, *Mabele*, *Argile* or *La Craie*. It may be sold as large pellets or in bulk and can resemble balls of clay or mud. It may be packaged in a clear plastic bag with or without labeling. This product has been found to contain lead and arsenic which can cause health problems.

How can lead affect my health?

Lead is a toxic metal and is unhealthy particularly for children and pregnant women. Lead poisoning can cause problems in pregnancy and learning and behavior problems in young children. Long-term effects of lead can include nervous system disorders and brain damage.

How can arsenic affect my health?

Arsenic is also a poisonous metal. People with long term exposures to arsenic may have an increased risk for cancer, skin lesions, eye irritation, and damage to the nervous system.

What should I do if I have used this product?

Immediately stop using these products.

Ask your health care provider to request a blood-lead test. (Blood-lead tests are available free of charge for children up to age 6 at Guilford County Department of Public Health. No appointment is needed.)

Keep these products away from children.

For more information or to report locations where these products are sold, call Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division at 336-641-4556.