

b. (INFORMED!) LEAD? CADMIUM? China Does It Again!

Over the past six years, the consumer product safety commission has recalled more than 180 million pieces of metal jewelry that contained dangerous levels of lead, and in August 2009, it lowered the acceptable amount of lead in children's jewelry to 300 parts per million. However, progress in regulating lead appears to have prompted manufacturers to use another toxic metal—cadmium.

In January this year, an Associated Press investigation revealed that many cheap metal pendants and bracelets manufactured in China contained dangerous levels of cadmium, with many products consisting of 84% to 90% cadmium. Prolonged exposure has been shown to cause kidney disease, severe bone loss and even lung cancer. Since that report, the commission has issued three recalls for jewelry items, all of which were marketed to young children and cost one to twelve dollars. If there is a silver lining to this toxic metal mess, it is that cadmium is not likely to cause as great a public health crisis as lead, primarily because its use is not as widespread.

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