



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH  
*Commissioner*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Friday, May 5, 2017**  
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## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT WARNS NEW YORKERS ABOUT CLAY POTTERY WITH EXTREMELY HIGH LEVELS OF LEAD**

*Three adult New Yorkers became lead poisoned after using clay pots,  
cups and dishes for preparing and serving foods and drinks*

*Traditional ceramic ware with high lead levels found in  
several stores in Bushwick and Jackson Heights*

**May 5, 2017** –The Health Department today warned New Yorkers about clay pots, cups and dishes (ceramic ware) containing extremely high levels of lead. Lead-glazed and lead-painted ceramics can release lead into food or drinks. In recent months, three adult New Yorkers became lead poisoned after using contaminated ceramic ware for preparing and serving foods and drinks. They had blood lead levels ranging from 11 to 33 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL), whereas adult blood lead levels should be less than 5 micrograms per deciliter (mcg/dL).

Health Department investigators found ceramic ware containing lead at stores in Bushwick and Jackson Heights. Many of the ceramic ware was un-labeled or mislabeled. Some pottery contained stickers identifying Mexico as the country of origin; others had labels written in Spanish that specified the ceramic ware was for decorative purposes only.

However, the decorative items were often sold alongside foods and produce, and shop owners told investigators that they were for culinary purposes. The Health Department purchased and tested some of the ceramic ware and found lead concentrations of up to 520,000 parts per million, which is extremely high and can have harmful effects on a person's health. Investigators are concerned contaminated ceramics may be for sale in other neighborhoods.



Samples of pottery found to have high lead levels.

“Traditional pottery may have glazes or paints that contain extremely high levels of lead and do not meet safety standards,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “We urge New Yorkers to be aware of the dangers associated with these ceramics, avoid using them for cooking or eating and speak with a doctor if you think you have been exposed to lead.”

The Health Department is issuing Commissioner's orders requiring businesses to post warning signs informing customers about lead hazards associated with ceramic ware and to remove the contaminated products from their shelves. The department is also conducting public education outreach in neighborhoods where the pottery was found. The agency is working with community-based organizations, elected officials, the Mexican consulate, and its Adult and Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program educates local business owners and the public about lead poisoning and potential lead hazards.

New Yorkers should immediately stop using traditional ceramic wares to prepare, store or serve food or drinks. Users should contact a physician to request a blood lead test; call **646-632-6023** or **212-POISONS (212-764-7667)** for additional information. To report locations where these products are sold, call **311**.

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