

Handbook of Pediatric Environmental Health

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A number of ethnic groups use toxic remedies, including *azarcon*, a lead-containing orange powder, and *greta*, a lead-containing yellow powder used by Mexican Hispanics ...

Adulterated Chinese "herbal" medications have caused adverse effects in both adults and children. These medications may contain ... heavy metals such as lead, mercury, and cadmium.

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Elemental mercury is also used in some folk remedies, such as those of Santeria, practiced by some groups of Hispanic Americans.

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Long-term exposure to mercury vapor primarily affects the central nervous system. Early nonspecific signs include insomnia, forgetfulness, loss of appetite, and mild tremor and may be misdiagnosed as psychiatric illness.

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Rituals

In certain ethnic groups, rituals may be a potential route of exposure to environmental contaminants. For example, ***some Hispanic Americans who practice Santeria may sprinkle elemental mercury in the house, possibly resulting in elevated levels of mercury in the indoor air*** (see Chapter 15).

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[Excerpter's Note: The AAP's reference to mercury poisoning from magico-religious mercury use is not based on any specific clinical or environmental findings. It is based in the circumstantial evidence of mercury sales by botanicas and statements about its ritual use. It seemed prudent to the AAP to include a reference to these magico-religious exposure routes because of their obvious toxic potential.]

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