

Kofinas Perinatal

Providing Care to the Unborn ®

HEALTH ADVISORY FROM THE NY STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

LEAD AND ARSENIC IN REMEDY FOR MORNING SICKNESS

Calabash Chalk is a West African remedy used to relieve the symptoms of morning sickness during pregnancy. 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. It is also referred to as ***Calabash Clay, Nzu, Poto, Calabar Stone, Ndom, Mabele, Argile or La Craie***. Following reports from the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA), DOHMH identified the product in several NYC stores. Laboratory tests reported elevated levels of lead and arsenic in these products. A general fact sheet on calabash chalk is available at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/lead/lead-calabash-chalk-faq.pdf>.

DOHMH recommends that:

- Ask patients **who may use West African remedies** about their use of *Calabash Chalk*, also known as *Calabash Clay, Nzu, Poto, Calabar Stone, Mabele, Argile, or La Craie*.
- If you or a friend of yours who is pregnant is using this product:
 - o Stop using this product immediately and discard it in the garbage. Inform your friends also.
 - o Clean the areas where this product was stored with soap and water to remove any remaining dust to prevent young children from exposure.
 - o Have your doctor test your blood lead level if you ingested any of this products.
- All women, especially pregnant women, should never use *Calabash Chalk* for any reason.
- Report all cases of known or suspected poisonings to the New York City Poison Control Center at 212-POISONS (764-7667) or 800-222-1222 as required by the New York City Health Code.

Resources

For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/health.