

Lead Poisoning: Crystal Decanters and Glassware, Glazed Dishes

Recommendations

1. Crystal decanters should only store beverages during the *seder* or meal.
2. Pregnant women, babies and young children should not drink from crystal glasses.
3. Some china and stoneware have a lead-based glaze, and can cause lead poisoning. These dishes should not be used.

Why?

Crystal usually contains between 24%-32% lead oxide, a substance toxic in very small amounts. When liquids sit in crystal glasses or a decanter they leach lead from the glass. Wine stored in a crystal decanter for 1 day will have about double the lead the government allows in drinking water. After 10 days, it is 10 times the legal limit.

Some dishes have a lead-based glaze. This is particularly true for china and stoneware that are highly decorated, hand crafted, or very old. These should not be used on a regular basis, and should be thrown out if there is any deterioration of the glaze.

Health Risks

Acute lead poisoning from a brief exposure can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea. Severe complications are rare.

Low levels of lead exposure in pregnant women is associated with low birth weight and premature delivery, and affects neurodevelopment of the fetus, leading to lower IQ, impairment in hearing and motor development, and increases in learning disabilities and attention deficit disorders.

Low levels of lead can cause subtle effects on the intellectual development of infants and children. Infants and toddlers are highly susceptible due to their rapid development and their higher rates of absorption of lead.

Please note that most children do not show any signs or symptoms of lead exposure, but repeated low level exposures cause lead to accumulate in the body over months and years.