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## **Over Half of Low-Cost Jewelry Ranks HIGH for Toxic Chemicals Including Lead, Cadmium, Mercury, Antimony & Arsenic, New Study Finds**

### ***New York Pendant Tops the Chart for Toxics***

#### **Groups Call for Public Health Protections at State, Federal Levels**

(Albany, NY) – The JustGreen Partnership today co-released new research from the [Ecology Center](#) on toxic chemicals in low-cost children's and adult jewelry at [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org). Researchers tested for chemicals -- including lead, cadmium, arsenic, mercury, antimony, bromine and chlorine (PVC) – which have been linked in animal and some human studies to acute allergies and to long-term health impacts such as birth defects, impaired learning, liver toxicity, and cancer.

Over half (57%) of the products tested had a “high” level of concern due to the presence of one or more hazardous chemicals detected at high levels. Five products contained over 10% **cadmium**, a known carcinogen. Fifty percent contained lead, with over half of these containing more than 300 ppm of lead in one or more components, exceeding the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) limit of lead in children's products.

“There is no excuse for jewelry, especially children's jewelry, to be made with some of the most well studied and dangerous substances on the planet,” said **Jeff Gearhart, Research Director at the Ecology Center and founder of HealthyStuff.org**. “We urge manufacturers to start replacing these chemicals with non-toxic substances immediately.”

Ninety-nine pieces of jewelry were tested from 14 different retailers, including: Ming 99 City, Burlington Coat Factory, Target, Big Lots, Claire's, Glitter, Forever 21, Walmart, H&M, Kohl's, Justice, Icing and Hot Topic. Samples were collected from six different states, including Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York and Vermont. **All of the products tested from New York were marketed to children, and one of these had the highest level of cadmium in the study: a charm on a bracelet purchased at Big Lots.**

**In the absence of adequate federal regulation, several types of legislation have been proposed in New York State. One is a direct limit on cadmium in jewelry or novelty products. The second is a broader approach that would require reporting of use of any heavy metal in children's products, and a restriction on such heavy metals in novelty products and apparel.**

**Both the Assembly and the Senate have passed legislation to set limits on cadmium, the Assembly in novelty products, the Senate in children's jewelry. The broader bill, A. 3141, dubbed by advocates in the JustGreen Partnership as the "Child-Safe Products Act," moved out of the NYS Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee last week.**

"Cadmium, lead, and other heavy metals pose significant health threat to New York families. The results of this study demonstrate how urgent it is that New York State act," said **Assemblyman Robert K. Sweeney, Chairman of the Environmental Conservation Committee**, who sponsors both bills.

"After the massive recalls of toys and jewelry made with lead five years ago, parents believed their children were being protected from heavy metals. Clearly this is not the case." said **Russ Haven of the New York Public Interest Research Group**. "Product makers need to get the message loud and clear: it's time to get all toxic materials out of children's products."

"Further testing of jewelry in New York reveals just how insidious the problem is. We have found lead, cadmium, arsenic, and antimony in inexpensive, juvenile jewelry." said **Bobbi Chase Wilding, Deputy Director of Clean and Healthy New York**. "Product makers have either continued to use lead in products that appeal to children and slapped on a warning label, or have moved on to other cheap, toxic metals. Neither of these options is acceptable. We can't ask parents to carry XRF analyzers. Addressing this problem one chemical at a time is just a band-aid. It's time for comprehensive reform of our chemical policies."

"Toxic chemicals have no business in products we bring into our homes, especially in items for kids who are more vulnerable to chemical exposures. Makers of children's products need to ensure they do not contain chemicals that harm children's health," said **David Carpenter, MD, Director of the Institute for Health and the Environment at the SUNY Albany School of Public Health**. "The hazards posed by heavy metals are well documented."

"Communities of color and low-income neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by pollution, and by the use of toxic materials in inexpensive products sold in our communities," said **Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director of WEAAT for Environmental Justice**. "All children deserve healthy environments and products."

The JustGreen Partnership released this data in concert with a day in Albany advocating for children's health protections. Representatives of partner organizations came from across the state. At the top of their priority list is A. 3141.

"Getting toxic chemicals out of children's products protects children, and it turns off the tap – preventing environmental releases of these chemicals during production and disposal, and protecting workers by driving safer approaches and substitutes," added **Corbin-Mark, who co-coordinates the JustGreen Partnership**. "Addressing these problems systemically has wide-ranging benefits, which is why our coalition is so diverse, including public health advocates, environmental justice groups, labor, and traditional environmental organizations."

HealthyStuff.org measured the presence of these chemicals with an X-ray fluorescence (XRF) analyzer – a proven, accurate indicator of elements in products. Anyone concerned about these jewelry products can visit [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org) and search by brand, jewelry type and chemical detected.

**Highlights of Study Results:**

OVERALL -- 59% (58) of products tested were rated as having HIGH level of concern due the presence of one or more hazardous chemical detected at high levels.

LEAD -- 27 of 99 (27%) of jewelry contained greater than 300 ppm lead in one or more components. 300 ppm is the CPSC limit of lead in children's products.

CADMIUM -- 10 of 99 (10%) of jewelry contained greater than 100 ppm cadmium in one or more components.

ARSENIC -- 12 of 95 (13%) of jewelry contained greater than 100 ppm arsenic.

MERCURY -- 5 of 95 (5%) of jewelry contained greater than 100 ppm mercury.

BROMINATED FLAME RETARDANTS -- 7 of 95 (7%) of jewelry contained brominated flame retardants (greater than 1,000 ppm bromine).

CHLORINE -- One-third, 11 of 95 (12%) of jewelry contained PVC (greater than 25,000 ppm chlorine).

According to the CPSC, parents and caregivers should not allow young children to be given, or to play with, cheap metal jewelry, especially when unsupervised. The CPSC states that: "Swallowing, sucking on or chewing a metal charm or necklace could result in exposure to lead, cadmium or other heavy metals, which are known to be toxic at certain levels of exposure."

However, in 2010 the CPSC declined to regulate cadmium in children's products, and instead has supported an industry developed voluntary standard. In response, six states have moved to regulate cadmium in the absence of federal leadership, including California, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota and Washington State. Federally, a wave of consumer pressure is pushing a rewrite of the Toxics Substance Control Act (TSCA), the federal law that regulates chemicals in commerce. The TSCA reform bill, the Safe Chemicals Act (S. 847), was introduced by Senator Lautenberg in 2011 and now has 15 co-sponsors.

**"Toxic jewelry is a symptom of the complete failure of our federal chemical regulatory system. Downstream companies like jewelry retailers, and downstream users like our children, will never be safe until we reform our chemicals laws to ensure products are safe before they arrive on store shelves." EXTRA QUOTE.**

Since 2007 researchers at the Ecology Center have performed over 20,000 tests on 7,000 consumer products, including pet products, vehicles, women's handbags, jewelry, back-to-school products, children's toys, building products and children's car seats.

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**ATTENTION JOURNALISTS:** B-Roll, graphs of results, an embeddable widget and mobile app are available at [www.HealthyStuff.org](http://www.HealthyStuff.org).