Keeping Safe on Your CCA-Treated Wood Playset

CCA (Copper Chromated Arsenic) is commonly used to treat outdoor wood products (such as play sets, decks, docks, and picnic tables) to protect against weather and pest damage. There is increasing evidence that the arsenic may leach out of the wood over time, getting onto the surrounding soil, onto young children’s hands, and ultimately, into their mouths. This very low dose of arsenic is not enough to “poison” a child, but it is known that even low levels of arsenic exposure over time may be harmful.

Remember that arsenic must get into children’s bodies to cause a problem. The following tips can help your family continue to enjoy your CCA Treated Wood play set, while reducing your exposure to arsenic.

- **Wash** children’s hands thoroughly before and after play, and before meals.
- **Do not serve snacks**, especially finger foods, during play on the equipment.
- **Allow no digging** play in the soil under or immediately surrounding the equipment.
- **Cover soil** surrounding the equipment with new (not recycled) mulch or sand in a thick layer. Replace mulch or sand as it wears down.
- **Closely supervise** of young children who are known to put non-food items in their mouths (such as dirt and bits of wood) when playing on the equipment.
- **Use plates and napkins** to serve food on treated wood picnic tables or decking. Observe children to make sure food is not placed directly on the wood.

**Other Steps You Can Take:**

- **Seal wood surfaces** annually with an oil-based, semi-transparent penetrating stain (available at hardware stores). Do not, however, sand or strip the wood surfaces.
- **Cover equipment** when not in use, or place a waterproof awning over the play area.
- **Dispose of scrap wood and sawdust** safely (i.e. double bag and put out for trash pick-up) if the treated wood equipment was constructed on site or if additional work has been performed on site. Do not allow children to play in the sawdust and do not burn the scrap wood.

For more information about arsenic or the University of Miami CCA Treated Wood Study, please contact Dr. Fleming at 305-361-4672.