



Jefferson County PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

Public Health Facility, 531 Meade Street, Watertown, New York 13601

Media Release

For Immediate Release

Faith Lustik, Health Planner

315-786-3723

Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

October 22, 2019, Watertown, NY– The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates nearly half a million children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their health, estimates During Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (October 20-26) the Jefferson County Public Health Service (JCPHS), the CDC and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are increasing awareness of childhood lead poisoning, prevention and the importance of screening young children for possible elevated blood lead levels.

Lead is a toxic element, especially in young children. When absorbed into the body, it can result in damage to the brain and nervous system, learning and behavior problems, slow growth and development, and hearing and speech problems. Lead can be found inside and outside the home. The most common source of exposure is from lead-based paint, which was used in many homes built before 1978. Children can be exposed by swallowing or breathing in lead dust created by old paint that has cracked and chipped, eating paint chips, disturbed paint that was caused by renovations, or chewing on surfaces coated with lead-based paint, such as window sills.

Lead poisoning is preventable! The key is preventing children from coming into contact with lead. There are simple steps that can be taken to protect family members from lead-based paint hazards in the home, such as regularly cleaning the home, washing children's hands and toys often, and wiping shoes before entering the home. Make sure any home renovations are done using lead safe work practices. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures. Other examples of possible sources of lead include some metal toys or toys painted with lead-based paint, furniture painted with lead-based paint, some metal-containing jewelry, some imported items (i.e., health remedies, foods and candies, cosmetics, powders or make-up used in religious ceremonies), and lead-glazed pottery or porcelain.

Children should be assessed for lead poisoning risk through age 6 and have a blood test at least at age 1 and 2. Pregnant women should also be assessed for risk and have a blood test if they are at risk. On 10/1 NYS Department of Health (DOH) enacted new regulations that lowered the threshold for when specific interventions, such as an environmental inspection, developmental assessment, nutritional counseling and a Clinical Lead Exposure Assessment, take place. If a child is found with elevated blood lead of 5ug/dL, the health care provider, JCPHS and the DOH will work with the family to reduce the exposure.

For more information about how to protect your family from lead poisoning, go to jcphs.org and click on Preventive Services.

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