



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

News Release for the Month of October Lead Poisoning Prevention

If you have children, you should know that lead poisoning is the number one preventable environmental health threat in the United States. Although it is true that children living in older homes are at greatest risk, lead poisoning is a danger to every family, regardless of where they live or their economic background.

The only sure way to know if a child has lead poisoning is to get a blood lead test. In New York State, all children must be tested for lead exposure at or around age one and again at or around age two.

Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week will be observed from Oct. 21 to 27, when the Otsego County Department of Health reminds parents that most children with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick.

The most common source of lead poisoning is from paint made before 1978 and the dust it turns into. A child can get lead poisoning by swallowing or breathing in lead. Pregnant women who have lead in their bodies can pass the lead to their unborn babies.

Even a small amount of lead can cause learning and behavioral problems later in life. If lead gets into a child's body, it can cause lower IQ, hearing loss, growth problems, and anemia.

"Lead is especially dangerous for young children. Young children spend a lot of time on the floor, and they put hands, toys and other things in their mouth," said Sue Smith SPHN, Lead Coordinator of the Otsego County Department of Health.

The first step in preventing lead poisoning is to keep your home in good repair. If you live in a house or apartment built before 1978, it's important to repair any peeling paint properly. When paint flakes are disturbed, the home can become filled with lead-containing dust. Call the local health department before you do any repair work to find out how to paint and repair safely.

Frequent washing is an effective way to keep lead from accumulating. Sue Smith recommends the following:

- Wash children's hands often, especially before eating and before bed time.
- Wash toys, pacifiers and bottles often, even if they don't look dirty.
- Mop floors often with a damp mop, and use damp cloths to clean windowsills.

“Whatever the age of your house or apartment, children can be exposed to lead if you let it get into your food or bring it into your home,” Sue Smith said.

Let tap water run for one minute before using. Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking and preparing infant formula. Use lead-free dishes and pots. Don't use imported pottery, painted china, leaded glass, crystal or pewter to serve or store food.

Lead is also in some children's jewelry and charms, old painted toys and furniture. If you have a job or hobby that involves working with lead, you should shower and change clothes and shoes before going home. Wash work clothes separately from other clothes.

You can also help protect your children from lead by serving foods rich in calcium, iron, and vitamin C.

For more information on how to protect children from exposure to lead, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230 or view our web site at www.otsegocounty.com/depts/doh or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead.

Otsego County Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W-Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
(607) 547-4230