

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lead Free Kids for a Healthy Future

Coldwater, MI. October 23-29, 2016 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. This year's theme, "**Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future**" focuses on the many ways parents can reduce a child's exposure to lead and prevent its serious health effects. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency encourages parents to keep reading so you can learn how to prevent lead poisoning from affecting your child's health.

Children under the age of 3 living in older housing are more likely to be poisoned by lead. All homes built prior to 1978, when lead paint was banned, may contain lead paint. However, homes built before 1950 are more likely to have paint that contains higher concentrations of lead. According to Val Newton, Prevention Services Director for the tri-county health department "If a home contains lead paint, normal wear and tear or home renovations may produce lead dust. By far, lead dust is the most common way children are poisoned by lead in these three counties."

Lead dust can remain in homes for a long time, collecting on places where children put their hands and play with toys, like floors and windowsills. Children, especially those under age three, often put their hands and toys in their mouths. This makes it very easy for lead dust to get into and damage their growing bodies. When lead is absorbed into the body, it can cause learning disabilities, behavior problems, hearing damage, language or speech delays and lower intelligence.

If you live in a home built before 1950 you can assume your home has lead paint. That means you need to do certain things to live safely with lead paint to protect your children from lead poisoning.

Here are six things you can do to help protect your family:

1. Once a week, clean floors, windowsills and tabletops with a wet mop or cloth.
2. Always wash children's hands after play and before meals, naps and bedtime.
3. Frequently wipe down toys, clean stuffed animals and wash bottles or pacifiers.
4. Routinely check painted windows, doors and floors for peeling or chipping paint.
5. Never dry scrape or sand chipping peeling or chipping paint. Learn how to renovate, repair and paint safely before beginning any home improvement projects.
6. Ask your child's health care provider about a blood lead test.

Rebecca Burns, Health Officer for the health department adds "Given that nearly two-thirds of the homes within the health jurisdiction were built prior to 1978, it is important that children be protected from the harmful effects of lead. The health department offers free lead screening to any child up to age 5 years that resides within the three counties. If you child's levels are elevated, we can also provide case management services to help address and lower those blood lead levels."

For more information about lead poisoning, prevention and screening topics, please visit our website at www.bhsj.org.

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