



NEWS RELEASE

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Illinois Department of Public Health Shares Tips to Prevent Lead Poisoning

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week October 20-26, 2019

SPRINGFIELD – Lead poisoning is one of the most prevalent and preventable environmental health hazards and is known to contribute to learning disabilities, developmental delays, and behavioral problems. During National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 20-26, 2019, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) wants to raise awareness about the danger of lead exposure and educate parents on how to reduce exposure to lead in their environment, prevent its serious health effects, and understand the importance of testing children.

“There is no safe level of lead in the body. Children exposed to lead tend to suffer from life-long complications that affect their ability to think, learn, or behave,” said IDPH Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. “During National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, I encourage people to learn how to identify lead hazards in their homes and ways to reduce or eliminate them.”

The level of Illinois childhood lead poisoning remains one of the highest in the nation. In 2018, more than 12,000 children tested had blood lead levels greater than 5 µg/dL, the intervention level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and required by the Illinois Lead Poisoning Prevention Act (LPPA).

Illinois law requires that all children six years of age or younger be assessed for lead risk. Physicians must perform a blood lead test for children who live in [high-risk areas](#) or meet other risk criteria determined through a childhood risk questionnaire administered by a health care provider.

The most common source of exposure is from deteriorated 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 peeled, cracked, or chipped, eating paint chips, or chewing on surfaces coated with lead-based paint, such as window sills. If you live in a house built before 1978, a certified inspector or risk assessor can be hired to check your home for lead-based paint or lead-based paint hazards.

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Lead can also be found in drinking water. The most common sources of lead in drinking water are lead pipes, faucets, and fixtures.

Lead exposure can be significantly reduced by taking simple precautions around the house. These include the following:

- Cleaning up paint chips and peeling paint
- Washing floors, counter tops, and window sills weekly with soap and water
- Using proper safety measures when renovating or remodeling your house, like spraying down painted surfaces with water before scraping or sanding, and using plastic sheeting to capture any debris generated
- Assuring that children and pregnant women do not enter a work area until renovations are complete and the area has been thoroughly cleaned
- Washing a child's hands, mouth and face, and toys often
- Having your water tested for lead. If lead is detected, allow the cold water to run for several minutes in the morning before using it for drinking, cooking, or mixing infant formula in case lead pipes or solder is present. Only use cold water for cooking
- Removing shoes when coming indoors so lead from dust or soil is not tracked inside
- Eating a well-balanced, low-fat diet that is high in calcium and iron, which can help reduce lead absorption

The primary goals of the Illinois Lead Program include lead exposure prevention through community education and public awareness campaigns, identifying lead-exposed children, and providing prompt interventions to reduce blood lead levels to improve health and developmental outcomes.

For more information about lead poisoning prevention, visit the IDPH [website](http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/lead-poisoning-prevention) at <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/lead-poisoning-prevention>

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