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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**WESTCHESTER COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT WORKS  
TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD LEAD POISONING  
National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week Observed**

October 25 – October 31 is National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week and the Westchester County Department of Health is encouraging parents and guardians to take precautions to prevent lead poisoning in their children.

“Lead poisoning is a serious illness that affects thousands of children each year and can cause a wide variety of severe health problems,” said Dr. Joshua Lipsman, Commissioner of Health for Westchester County. “At low blood lead levels, lead can adversely affect a child’s ability to learn. At high levels, lead is an acute poison that can require hospitalization for treatment. Lead poisoning can cause mental retardation, seizures and in severe cases, death,” Dr. Lipsman warned.

The Health Department’s Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (LPPP) works to reduce the incidence of lead poisoning in Westchester’s children. The LPPP educates parents and providers about the dangers and symptoms of lead poisoning; conducts investigations and interventions to discover and eliminate the sources of lead found in the home or other locations of lead poisoned children; and maintains a lead poisoning registry to track lead poisoned children in Westchester County.

In 2008, the LPPP provided follow-up for close to 300 children who were found to have high lead levels through a routine blood lead test. Although that number is down from 2007 when over 400 children were found to have elevated blood lead levels, new cases of lead poisoning continue to occur and are primarily due to lead hazards in the home.

The Lead Poisoning Prevention Program also has staff members who conduct home assessments in high-risk zip codes to identify and remove environmental lead hazards prior to a child becoming lead poisoned. Owners of older homes built before 1978 that are found to have lead paint hazards may be eligible for subsidies to cover the cost of home lead remediation through a grant program available with the Westchester County Department of Planning.

**MORE**

## Lead Poisoning Prevention P.2

The Health Department wants parents and caregivers to be aware that lead poisoning is preventable and that there are several ways to minimize a child's exposure to lead.

- Lead Poisoning can be easily detected by a simple blood test. All children between the ages of six months and six years old should be assessed annually by their pediatrician and all children at ages one and two years should be tested for lead exposure.
- Pregnant women should be assessed for lead exposure and have a lead test through their prenatal health care provider because lead exposure can impact an unborn baby.
- Eating chipping and peeling lead based paint is the most common way a child is exposed to lead. Parents should clean up peeling paint and paint chips frequently using wet methods (mop, sponge, or cloth) and an all purpose degreasing cleaner.
- House cleaning should be done by wet mopping and damp dusting to avoid putting lead dust in the air which children can inhale.
- Children's hands should be washed frequently, particularly before meals and snacks and after playing outdoors.
- Small children should be closely supervised to know what they are putting in their mouths. Many young children have a habit of eating things other than food.
- Children should be fed a well balanced diet that is high in calcium and iron which can help in minimizing their exposure to lead. Foods such as cheese, yogurt, beans and dark leafy green vegetables are good sources of calcium and iron.
- Lead and lead paint can be found in imported jewelry, toys, candy and make-up. Children should not be allowed to use, wear, eat or play with these items or any that you are unsure about.
- Use pottery only for display if you are unsure about the content of lead in the glaze.

Lead in drinking water is rarely a significant source of lead poisoning. However, if you are unsure about the level of lead in your drinking water, be sure to use only water from the cold water tap for cooking and drinking or making a baby's formula. Hot water picks up more lead from pipes and solder. In addition, if more than six hours have gone by since a tap was last turned on, run the water until it becomes noticeably cooler to the touch before using it for cooking or drinking.

For more information about lead poisoning prevention, call the Westchester County Department of Health at (914) 813-5000 or visit the department's website at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).