



## Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Health Department Encourages Action for National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week**

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 24 million housing units in the U.S. have lead-based paint hazards and elevated levels of lead dust. Over 4 million of these hazardous homes have young children living in them who are highly susceptible to lead poisoning.

Lead is highly toxic and commonly found in products such as paint. Up until 1978, paint containing lead was used in and around our homes, workplaces, and environments. Lead can cause a range of health problems – from behavioral problems and learning disabilities, to seizures and death. Children age six and younger are at highest risk of lead poisoning due to the high absorption rate in their quickly growing bodies. Major sources of lead exposure to children are deteriorating lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in homes. Children can also be exposed to lead from other sources including take-home exposures from a workplace, lead in soil, or contaminated drinking water.

Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead exposure remains a serious concern. Lead can have serious consequences for children including decreased IQ and the development of learning disabilities, nerve problems, kidney damage or even death. “We encourage parents, property owners, tenants, and contractors to be proactive when it comes to lead. The majority of lead poisoned children do not display symptoms until permanent damage has been done,” said Jenna Willems, Healthy Homes Program Coordinator at the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health.

To increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention, the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health, along with the CDC, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, is participating in National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) October 19-25, 2017.

This year's NLPPW theme, "Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future," underscores the importance of testing your home, testing your child, and learning how to prevent lead poisoning's serious health effects.

Public Health recommends that **EVERY CHILD BE TESTED!** All children regardless of race, economic background, or location of home should be tested for lead poisoning starting at 12 months. The testing is then recommended at different intervals for different children with regards to risk of lead exposure.

Parents can reduce a child's exposure to lead in many ways. Here are preventive measures you can make to help protect your family:

- Wash your child's hands, toys, and pacifiers. Do this often, especially prior to eating, to reduce transferring lead paint chips or dust.

- Clean floors, window sills, window troughs, and other dusty painted surfaces with a wet mop, wet cloth, or wet paper towel. Discard the cleaning cloth when finished.
- Don't let your child play in bare soil outside your home. Plant grass or cover soil with mulch. Also, remove shoes before entering the home so leaded soil stays outside.
- Find out where the lead hazards are in your home! Certified professionals can inspect your home for no charge through the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health to make you aware of what painted materials in your home contain lead. Keeping children away from these areas is important.
- Take extra precautions when remodeling the inside or outside of your pre-1978 home. Children should not have access to the remodel area and all dust and paint chips should be contained. Hire a contractor trained in lead-safe practices for known or potential lead hazards.
- Spread the word. Encourage your family and friends with young children to get educated and take action on lead.

“Remember, we encourage action because lead poisoning is completely preventable,” said Willems.

For more information, contact the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health at 641-421-9339 or [www.cghealth.com](http://www.cghealth.com) .