



Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health

MEDIA RELEASE

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Health Department Recognizes Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 23-29th.

Childhood lead poisoning is one of the most highly preventable environmental health related diseases among our children. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that nearly half a million children living in the United States have elevated blood lead levels that may cause significant damage to their health. The estimate is based on children with a blood lead level of 5 micrograms per deciliter or higher. Lowered by the CDC in 2012, five micrograms is the new reference level that indicates when action should be taken. No safe lead level in children has been identified.

Lead is a highly toxic metal used for many years in products found in and around our homes (particularly paint). Lead may cause a range of health problems – from behavioral problems and learning disabilities, to seizures and death. Lead exposure has the ability to affect nearly every system in the body. Children age six and younger are at highest risk. Major sources of lead exposure to U.S. children include deteriorating lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in deteriorating buildings. Children can also be exposed to lead from additional sources including contaminated drinking water, take-home exposures from a workplace, and lead in soil.

“Many homes in Cerro Gordo County were built before 1978 and may have lead-based paint. If you are unsure if you have lead in your pre-1978 home, the best thing you can do is take the preventative measure of testing your home, especially if you have young children living or visiting the home,” said Jenna Willems, Health Homes Program Coordinator, Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health. Prevention of lead is crucial as lead impacts children permanently. There are usually no symptoms of lead poisoning until permanent damage is done. Willems adds, “If you are planning on remodeling or renovating your home in the future, get your home tested prior, whether or not there is chipping or peeling paint”.

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 (LPPW) October 23-29.

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 some simple things you can do to help protect your family:

1. **Get your Home Tested.** Before you buy an older home, ask for a lead inspection. The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health can test your home for you.
2. **Get your Child Tested.** Even if your young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them for lead.
3. **Get the Facts!** The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health can provide you with helpful information about preventing childhood lead poisoning.

The Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health has recently received Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grant funds that can allow qualified low-income families with children to test for and remediate lead hazards in their home or rental home. Anyone interested should call 641-421-9339 to apply or visit www.cghealth.com/topics/HUD/ for more information.

For more information, contact the Cerro Gordo County Department of Public Health at 641-421-9339 or visit their new website at www.cghealth.com .

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