

## NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

(PHMDC)

Contact: Jeff Golden (608) 243-0302

### Lead Poisoning Still Presents Major Risk to Children

#### Lead Paint in Older Housing Continues as Key Source of Exposure

Madison WI – October 27, 2015 - Lead poisoning is a horrible thing to happen to a child and can have life-long implications. Long term exposure to lead, even at very low levels, can damage the brain, kidneys, and nervous system, leaving children with a variety of serious long term conditions ranging from learning disabilities, to attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, and to behavioral problems. Although the incidence of lead poisoning has been steadily decreasing over the last few decades in Dane County, the problem has not gone away.

The most common source of lead exposure is in homes built before 1978, where lead-based paints and other potential lead hazards may still be present. When old paint deteriorates it leaves paint chips and/or paint dust – both of which present the highest risk for lead exposure and the possibility of lead poisoning. Other sources may be found in certain types of glazed ceramics, antiques, and even in certain imported candies and folk remedies.

PHMDC's goal is to prevent children from being exposed to lead hazards, ensure that Dane County children receive blood lead screening and assist families with children poisoned by lead. PHMDC also provides ongoing analysis and surveillance of lead poisoning issues in the City of Madison and Dane County.

Parents of children under the age of 6 should make sure that the child gets a blood test from their health care provider. This is important because symptoms of lead poisoning are not obvious and it is all too easy for them to go unrecognized. If the child is uninsured, PHMDC can do this testing without charge.

When testing shows a blood lead level of 5 micrograms per deciliter or greater, PHMDC will provide case management services to assist families. The highest priority is given to families with children showing blood lead levels equal to or greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter.

In 2014, a total of 523 children received childhood lead poisoning prevention services in Dane County ranging from educational outreach to identifying lead hazards in the home, performing risk evaluations of the home, and investigating exterior lead issues.

These efforts demonstrate that childhood exposure to lead remains a persistent and preventable public health challenge that requires consistent and on-going attention. This is why National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week presents us with an important reminder to continue to pay attention to this ongoing challenge. If you have

questions or concerns about potential lead exposure in your home, please call PHMDC at (608) 266-4821.

For more detailed information on lead poisoning prevention

<http://www.publichealthmdc.com/environmental/healthyHomes/lead/index.cfm>

A useful brochure with information on lead poisoning risks to children

<http://www.publichealthmdc.com/documents/LeadPois-Eng.pdf>

Clear advice on how to avoid lead exposure during remodeling and painting projects in older homes

<http://www.publichealthmdc.com/documents/LeadGuide-Eng.pdf>

For information about National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/nlppw.htm>

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An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/lead-poisoning-still-presents-major-risk-to-children>