

NEWS RELEASE

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New Guidelines for Lead Levels in the Blood

McCook – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced its acceptance of its advisory committees recommendation to redefine the level at which children are considered to have too much lead in their blood and to focus the nation's attention on preventing lead exposure.

CDC's previous level of concern, unchanged since 1991, was a blood lead level of 10 micrograms per deciliter. The new reference value is now 5 micrograms per deciliter.

Lead poisoning is irreversible. Older housing with lead-based paint, and the dust and soil it generates, are the key sources of exposure to children. Lead poisoning can affect nearly every system in the body. Because lead poisoning often occurs with no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. Lead poisoning can cause learning disabilities, behavioral problems, and, at very high levels, seizures, coma, and even death.

"Lead poisoning is irreversible, but is also preventable," states Jamey Keen, Public Health Nurse. "You can reduce your child's exposure to lead by identifying and safely removing articles in the environment. Children under the age of six are at the highest risk because they tend to pick things up and put them in their mouth. Some objects may be contaminated with lead dust. Children who live in an older house, built before 1960, are also at greater risk. Some homes built as recently as 1978 may also contain lead paint."

The following are guidelines provided by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Get your child tested. Even a child who appears healthy may have high levels of lead. You can't tell if a child has lead poisoning unless you have them tested. CDC recommends that children be tested when they are a year old, or at six months if you think your home has lead in it. Children on Kids Connection or Medicaid are provided with the required benefit during their Well Child Checks of lead testing at the ages of 12 and 24 months. Contact your doctor or local health clinic for scheduling.
- Keep it clean. Ordinary dust and dirt may contain lead. Children can swallow or breathe lead contaminated dust just by playing in dust or dirt and then put their fingers or toys in their mouths. They may also ingest lead contaminates if they eat without first washing their hands.
 - Keep areas where your children play as dust free as possible.
 - Wash pacifiers and bottles after they fall on the floor. Keep extras handy.
 - Mop floors and wipe window ledges and chewable surfaces such as cribs with a

solution of powdered automatic dishwasher detergent in warm water. Do this twice a week.

- Wash toys and stuffed animals regularly.
- Make sure your children wash their hands before meals, nap time, and bed time.
- Reduce the risk from lead paint.
 - Make sure your child does not chew on anything covered with lead paint, such as painted window sills, cribs, or playpens.
 - Don't burn painted wood. It may contain lead. Heating lead paint may release lead into the air.
- Don't remove lead paint yourself.
 - Families have been poisoned by scraping or sanding lead paint. These activities generate large amounts of lead dust.
 - Lead dust from repairs or renovations of older buildings can remain in the building long after the work is completed.
- Don't bring lead dust into your home.
 - If you work in construction, demolition, painting, with batteries, in a radiator repair shop, lead factory, or if your hobby involves lead, you may unknowingly bring lead into your home via your hands or clothes.
 - Always wash your hands and change your clothes before you go home.
- Get lead out of your drinking water.
 - Most private or city water wells do not naturally contain lead. Water usually picks up lead *inside your home* from household plumbing that is made with lead materials. Boiling the water will not reduce the amount of lead. Bathing is not a problem because lead does not enter the body through the skin.
 - Do not drink, cook or make baby formula with water from the tap if you have not had your home water tested for lead.
 - If the cold water hasn't been used for more than two hours, run it for 30-60 seconds before drinking it or using it for cooking.
 - Consider buying a filter certified for lead removal.
- Eat right.
 - A child who gets enough iron and calcium will absorb less lead. Food rich in iron include eggs, lean red meat, and beans. Dairy products are high in calcium.
 - Don't store food or liquid in lead crystal glassware or imported or old pottery.
 - If you reuse plastic bags to store or carry food, keep the printing on the outside of the bag.

More information on lead or lead poisoning can be obtained by visiting <http://epa.gov/lead/> or www.cdc.lead.com or by calling Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th Street (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook. Join us on Facebook and Twitter. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Hayes, Hitchcock, Frontier, Furnas, Perkins and Red Willow counties.

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