



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 22-28, 2017**

Little Rock, Ark. – Childhood lead poisoning is considered to be the most preventable environmental disease among young children; yet, approximately half a million children in the United States have blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter, the level at which Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says public health actions should start. In 2016, there were 189 children in Arkansas reported to have blood lead levels above 5 micrograms per deciliter.

Lead is toxic to the human body. In particular, children six years old and younger are more vulnerable to lead poisoning than adults because their brains and spinal cords are still developing, and effects on early childhood development can be severe. Even in small amounts, lead can affect a child's mental and physical growth, causing learning disabilities, disorders in coordination, attention deficit disorder, and stunted growth. Some of these effects may persist beyond childhood. For pregnant women, harmful effects can include premature births, smaller babies, and miscarriage. There is no safe level of lead exposure.

"Unfortunately, the effects of lead exposure in a young child can be devastating and lifelong," says Dr. Dirk Haselow, State Epidemiologist at the Arkansas Department of Health. "Prevention of lead exposure is key."

Children with high blood lead levels were most likely exposed to lead in their own homes from leaded dust and lead-based paint chips, especially if that home was built before 1978. Children can also be exposed to lead from additional sources, including contaminated drinking water, take-home exposures from a workplace, and lead in soil. Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. A simple blood test may be able to help prevent permanent damage from occurring.

Steps that your family can take to reduce lead exposure include the following:

- Wash your child's hands before meals and after playing outside.
- Provide your child with meals and snacks that are high in iron, calcium and Vitamin C.
- Frequently wash toys, pacifiers and other items that your child uses regularly.
- Dust and wet mop weekly.
- Have your family members leave their shoes outside the door.
- Ensure that any home renovation and maintenance work is done in a lead-safe way.

Parents can reduce a child's exposure to lead in many ways. Below are some simple things you can do to help protect your family:

1. **Get Your Home Tested:** Find out how to minimize risks of lead exposure by hiring a certified professional to test older homes for lead. Water pipes in some older homes may contain lead solder where lead may leach out into the water. Learn more about lead in drinking water [here](#).
2. **Get Your Child Tested:** A simple blood test can detect lead. Consult your doctor for advice on testing your children.
3. **Get the Facts:** Find out about the hazards of lead. The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) can provide you with helpful information about preventing childhood lead poisoning. Contact them at 501-671-1472 or review the ADH Lead-Based Paint Program website [here](#).

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The only way to fully rid a pre-1978 home of lead is to abate it. Abatement should always be done by a state-certified contractor. Abatement involves: the removal of lead-based paint and dust-lead hazards; the permanent covering or encapsulation of lead-based paint; the replacement of parts or fixtures painted with lead-based paint; and the removal or permanent covering of soil-lead hazards, as well as all set-up, cleanup, disposal, and post abatement clearance testing actions linked to such measures.

An owner of a home built prior to 1978, who does not wish to fully abate lead hazards, should be careful when disturbing lead-based paint. Homeowners should only hire federally-certified Renovation, Repair and Painting (RRP) contractors, to make sure that the work is done in a lead-safe way. This protects people who live in the home from hazards connected with renovation, repair and painting. Done in the wrong way, these activities can create harmful leaded dust when lead paint is disturbed.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) focuses on the many ways parents can reduce children's exposure to lead in their environment and prevent serious health effects from lead poisoning. The 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. To raise awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention, the ADH, along with other agencies such as the CDC, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, is participating in NLPPW October 22-28. NLPPW focuses on the many ways parents can reduce children's exposure to lead in their environment and prevent its serious health effects.

The ADH will be participating in multiple activities in central Arkansas throughout the week. Visit the ADH's Lead-Based Paint Program at the following events in support of NLPPW:

Monday, Oct. 23: Lowes, North Little Rock, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 24: Fuller and Son Hardware (NLR), 9728 Maumelle Blvd, North Little Rock, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 26: Big Boo!seum Bash, Witt Stephens Jr. Nature Center, Little Rock, 5:30 to 8 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 27: Boo on the Bayou, Delta Rivers Nature Center, Pine Bluff, 6 to 9 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 28: Boo on the Bayou, Delta Rivers Nature Center, Pine Bluff, 6 to 9 p.m.

For more information, contact the ADH Lead-Based Paint Program at 501-671-1472 or contact the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD.

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