



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Test your home, test your child, and learn how to prevent lead poisoning

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nearly a half of a million children living in the United States have blood lead levels high enough to cause significant damage to their health, estimates the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, based on data from national surveys conducted in 2007-2008 and 2009-2010.

Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. If high blood lead levels are not detected early, children with such high levels of lead in their bodies can suffer from damage to the brain and nervous system. They can also develop behavior and learning problems (such as hyperactivity), slowed growth, hearing problems, and aggressive behavior patterns.

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Tom Miller of the Alabama Department of Public Health states, "The recommendation to shift the focus of primary prevention of lead exposure by lowering the reference value from 10 to 5 micrograms per deciliter will contribute to reducing and eliminating dangerous lead sources in children's environment before they are exposed. This is a vital step in preventing children from coming into contact with lead and treating children who have been poisoned by lead."

To increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention, the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, along with 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, Oct. 19-25. This year's theme, "Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future," underscores the importance of testing your home, testing your child, and learning how to prevent the serious health effects of lead poisoning.

In observance of the week, events such as proclamations, lead screenings, community awareness events, and educational campaigns will be conducted statewide. According to Jacqueline Harris, program director, all children should be tested for lead poisoning at 12 and 24 months of age as recommended by the CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

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

1. Get your home tested. Before you buy an older home, ask for a lead inspection.

2. Get your child tested. Even if your young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them for lead.
3. Get the facts! Your local health department can provide you with helpful information about preventing childhood lead poisoning.

For more information, contact Jacqueline Harris, M.S.N., at (334) 206-2966 or 1-800-545-1098.

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10/22/14