

NEWS RELEASE

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Testing for Childhood Lead Poisoning Recommended to Prevent Lifelong Health Problems

Three decades ago, lead poisoning was a major U.S. health hazard, but the introduction of safety precautions including restrictions on the use of lead-based paint and the removal of lead from gasoline helped to decrease the public exposure to lead. Nonetheless, lead poisoning continues to be a public health hazard and research has demonstrated there is no safe level of lead for children.

“As of 2016, more than 88,000 children nationwide had documented elevated venous blood lead levels that were greater than 5 micrograms per deciliter,” said Regional West pediatrician Todd Brubaker, DO, FAAP. “This is the level, and greater, at which we have good medical data supporting an increased risk of ADHD and even mild cognitive decline versus children who do not have lead exposures.”

Dr. Brubaker, who specializes in lead and environmental exposures in pediatric patients, added that a child’s blood lead concentration depends on their environment, habits, and nutritional status.

In western Nebraska, lead is commonly found in the soil and employees may be exposed to lead through occupations including industrial painting, heavy machinery refurbishing or refinishing, mining, and natural gas and oil extraction. Houses throughout the region, constructed before 1978, may still contain lead-based paint. The renovation of older homes may release lead ‘dust,’ which is particularly dangerous to children.

All children should be tested for lead poisoning at one and at two years of age via simple finger poke. Children who are on a Medicaid and children who receive WIC are required to have their lead levels tested at one and two years of age.

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.
2. Get your child tested. Even if your young children seem healthy, ask your doctor to test them for lead.
3. Learn about drinking water. Water pipes in some older homes may contain lead solder where lead may leach out into the water.

For more information about lead poisoning, please call 308-633-2866 x106 or toll free 877-218-2490. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.