



News Release

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

DATE: October 19, 2023
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RELEASES VIDEO ABOUT LEAD POISONING PREVENTION TO RAISE AWARENESS IN FAMILIES

Lead Poisoning Prevention Week Runs October 22 to 28

(White Plains, NY) – In recognition of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week which runs from October 22 to 28, the Westchester County Health Department is releasing a video that shows families how to keep their children safe from lead.

The video can be viewed on the County's website in [English](#) and in [Spanish](#).

The video will be shared widely with local community groups, and will play in Health Department clinics throughout Westchester. Westchester County Executive George Latimer reminds families during Lead Poisoning Prevention Week to take steps now to assure children are protected from the harmful effects of lead exposure in their own homes.

Latimer said: "I encourage all parents and caregivers to watch this video to learn how to keep their children safe from lead, which can be found in painted surfaces in a number of Westchester homes. This informative video empowers parents and caregivers, and explains how to get help to identify and safely remove sources of lead to prevent further exposure."

The County Health Department recognizes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week to raise awareness about the dangers of lead so families can reduce childhood exposure. Lead is a toxic mineral that can cause permanent and irreversible cognitive loss, lead to behavioral problems and can decrease learning ability. All children, from six months to six years old, should have a lead assessment done annually by their medical provider, and by New York State law, all children who are one and two years old must receive a blood lead test.

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD said: “There is no safe level of lead for children and there is no cure for lead poisoning, but lead poisoning is 100 percent preventable. We need your help to keep lead away from children. When we are notified that a child has been exposed to lead, we work with the family to identify the source of the exposure and to correct it or move the child and family to a safer place.”

Amler said families can help by keeping all healthcare provider appointments to assess their child’s progress in reducing that blood lead level, following the tips in our video and cooperating with Department staff.

Amler continued: “While the most common source of lead poisoning is chipped or peeling paint, sometimes the problem is candy, toys, glazed pottery or cosmetics from other countries. We work with families to identify the lead risks and work with all involved so these risks can be removed, remediated or contained. Working together, we can achieve the best outcomes for Westchester County’s children.”

The Health Department’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program notifies families of children whose blood lead level meets the lowest state threshold for concern, explains the dangers of lead exposure and recommends ways to reduce it, offers free lead inspections to identify the source and recommends follow up with their child’s doctor.

For the year ending September 30, 192 children were identified as lead poisoned, up from 186 during the prior 12 months. During the past 12 months, the blood lead level of 171 children decreased to levels that no longer require Health Department intervention. The County Health Department is now tracking the progress of 259 children who are lead poisoned. The Department also follows the progress of any child under age 18 who arrives in this country with an elevated lead level of five or above, to ensure that care continues wherever the child is placed.

To protect Westchester’s youngest residents, the County Health Department also works to reduce lead exposure in pregnant women. The County has identified 19 pregnant women with elevated blood lead levels this year, and is working with them and with building owners to identify the source, reduce their exposure and follow up to assess the exposure of their newborns.

About 500,000 American children between ages one and five have elevated levels of lead in their blood, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The top sources of lead in Westchester, from most frequent to least, are:

- Flaking or peeling lead-based paint in homes built before 1978
- Old painted wooden windows
- Lead dust on window sills, floors and toys
- Stained glass windows or casement windows with lead dividers
- Ceramic pottery from other countries, particularly in Latin America, India and the Middle East

And less frequently:

- Herbal medicines from the Middle East, Latin America, China and India
- Candy and spices from Mexico, the Middle East, Latin America, India and China
- Cosmetics from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Middle Eastern and African countries
- Costume jewelry and toys made in other countries and often sold in dollar and discount stores

To request more information about lead or a free lead inspection, call Westchester County’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 914-813-5240.

Property owners of single-family or multi-family homes throughout Westchester are encouraged to [apply for the County’s Lead Safe Westchester \(LSW\) Program](#), made possible by a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The LSW Program provides **FREE** improvements and repairs to reduce lead-based paint, dust and other safety hazards in housing units, built before 1978 where residents with

low to moderate incomes reside. Priority is given to units housing children under the age of 6 and/or units where a pregnant woman lives. Funds are awarded on a first come, first served basis, based on the occupants' eligibility and on a home inspection that determines the presence of lead. To request an application, property owners, landlords and tenants call 914-995-4402 or e-mail kqte@westchestergov.com.

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