



NEWS

R E L E A S E

Illinois Department of Public Health

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CONTACT: Melaney Arnold

Communications Manager

(217) 558-0500

www.idph.state.il.us

Lead Poisoning Prevention Week - October 23-29, 2011 Protecting our Children

Illinois has one of the highest numbers of lead poisoning cases in the nation

SPRINGFIELD – Almost a quarter of a million children in the United States have blood lead levels high enough to cause significant damage to their health, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) identified approximately 3,300 Illinois children last year with elevated blood lead levels, one of the highest numbers in the country. In observance of Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, IDPH is working to raise awareness about the importance of testing children and homes for lead, and learning how to prevent exposure that can result in serious health effects.

“Even at low levels, lead poisoning can affect almost every system in the body, causing learning disabilities, shortened attention span, behavioral problems and, in extreme cases, seizures, coma or even death,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Acting Director Dr. Craig Conover. “Lead poisoning is preventable if you recognize lead hazards and test your home and children.”

Major sources of lead exposure among Illinois children are lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust found in homes built before lead-based paint was banned in 1978. An estimated two million homes in Illinois were built before 1978 and still contain lead. However, IDPH reports a significant decline in the number of lead poisoned children under the age of six from 32.1 percent in 1996, to 1.2 percent in 2010.

Children six months through six years of age are required to be assessed for risk of lead exposure or tested before entering day care, preschool or kindergarten. Blood tests are recommended at ages 12 months and 24 months. The only way to know if a child has lead poisoning is by testing their blood.

For more information on lead poisoning symptoms, prevention, treatment and eliminating lead in your home, log onto <http://www.idph.state.il.us/envhealth/ehpublications.htm#lead>.

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