

## NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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### **Lead Screening in Children**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department is working with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to promote lead testing in children and follow up on lead levels that are higher than acceptable levels. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at least 4 million households have children living in them that are being exposed to high levels of lead.

“Anyone can be exposed to lead,” states Melissa Propp, RN Public Health Nurse at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “There are often no obvious symptoms, which makes testing very important.” Children between the ages of one and five are recommended to have a blood lead test. If their lead level is above five micrograms per deciliter, the health department will help to find the source of the lead exposure.

Lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the most common sources of lead for U.S. children. Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978; however, houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint. Check for areas of cracking paint that looks like alligator skin, especially around windows, door frames, porches, and around the foundation. Other sources of exposure can be parents who work in galvanizing, remodeling, or have hobbies like re-loading ammunition or making fishing lures. For a complete list of potential sources, visit [www.cdc.gov/lead](http://www.cdc.gov/lead).

Small children are more susceptible to lead exposure because of their tendency to put things in their mouths. “Children develop a taste for lead-based paint because it is sweet, so they will return to areas of exposure,” states Propp. Parents or guardians can reduce this risk by washing hands before meals, before naps or bedtime, and after playing outdoors. Minimize the use of hand sanitizer until the lead is removed; it causes lead dust to cling to hands, leading to further exposure.

At their 12 to 15 month well-child checkup, the child’s parents/guardians should be asked specific questions to determine their risk for lead exposure. If the response to any of the following questions is “yes” or “don’t know,” the child should be tested:

- 1) Does the child live in or often visit a house, daycare, preschool, home of a relative, etc., built before 1950?
- 2) Does the child live in or often visit a house built before 1978 that has been remodeled within the last year?
- 3) Does the child have a brother, sister or playmate with lead poisoning?
- 4) Does the child live with an adult whose job or hobby involves lead?
- 5) Does the child’s family use any home remedies or cultural practices that may contain or use lead?
- 6) Is the child included in a special population group, i.e., foreign adoptee, refugee, migrant, immigrant, or foster care child?

For more information, contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10<sup>th</sup> (one block north of Arby’s) in McCook or 501 Broadway in Imperial (5<sup>th</sup> Street entrance). Information can also be found on the website at [www.swhealth.ne.gov](http://www.swhealth.ne.gov) or on Facebook and Twitter.

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