

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week – Delaware Sees Concerning Decrease in Childhood Lead Testing During Pandemic

DOVER (October 27, 2021) – National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLLPW) is October 24 to 30 and the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) is strongly encouraging all parents to get their babies and toddlers their regular tests for lead exposure. Delaware regulations require that each child in Delaware get a blood lead level test at or around 12 months of age and again at 24 months.

As the COVID-19 pandemic began shutting down Delaware businesses in 2020, DPH saw another slowdown – far fewer babies and toddlers are being tested for lead exposure. A recent review of Delaware childhood blood lead testing data shows a significant decrease in childhood lead screenings in 2020 due to the pandemic. Lead testing rates dropped by an average of 54% in the first six months of 2020, compared to 2019. During the first six months of 2021, childhood lead testing rates in Delaware dropped by an average of 63%, compared to 2019.

Children younger than age 6, including unborn babies, are most susceptible to lead poisoning because their brains and central nervous systems are still developing. Childhood lead poisoning permanently damages the brain, leading to learning disabilities and other health problems.

“There is really no safe level of lead in the blood, so it is essential for those who may have missed getting their child

tested to do so immediately,” said DPH Director, Dr. Karyl Rattay. “Testing is an easy way to detect a problem and prevent further exposure.”

The Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at DPH encourages physicians to order a blood lead-level test for children for the following important reasons:

- Children and families are spending more time in their homes during the pandemic, increasing their risk of lead exposure from paint and dust, the primary sources of lead poisoning.
- Many families and property owners in older homes are also using this time to initiate Do-It-Yourself home projects or renovations, further increasing the risk of lead exposure.

In conjunction with National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, Delawareans are invited to attend an educational CDC webinar, “Childhood Lead Exposure in the United States: CDC’s Role in Prevention, Education, and Surveillance,” on Thursday, October 28, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. CDC experts will discuss sources of lead in children’s environments, populations at higher risk, current trends among children in the U.S., prevention strategies, and current initiatives. To register: https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_pV4XkcWN RiW1lzFVfNNuhw. A Spanish version of the webinar will be held on October 28, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. To register: https://www.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_vKNLqoJf Q3emlKmZPS2IUg.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes and partners are offering six engaging webinars featuring stakeholders from across the federal government and housing sector. For more information about these programs, including registration links, visit https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/HH/documents/NLPPW_Webi

[nar_Program_2021.pdf](#)

For additional information about childhood lead poisoning, contact the DPH Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 302-744-4546, ext. 5, or visit <https://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/hsp/lead.html>.