

Sherlita Amler, MD, MS, FAAP  
Commissioner of Health



Robert J. Bondi  
Putnam County Executive

Robert Morris, PE  
Director of Environmental Health

Putnam County Department of Health, 1 Geneva Road, Brewster, N.Y 10509

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: Friday, October 22, 2010**

**Contact: Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health, Putnam County Department of Health, 845-808-1335**

**October 24-30 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week**  
*Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future*

Brewster - Lead is a major environmental threat for children. The Center for Disease Control estimates that nearly a quarter of a million children living in the United States have blood lead levels high enough to cause significant damage to their health. High blood lead levels can cause problems with a child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn. Lead can also harm babies before they are born. To raise the public's awareness of childhood lead poisoning, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week will be observed from October 24<sup>th</sup> -30<sup>th</sup>.

Most childhood lead poisoning is caused by lead dust from old, peeling lead paint in buildings built before 1978. This, often invisible, lead dust settles on toys, windowsills and floors. Young children spend a lot of time on the floor, and put hands, toys, and other things in their mouth. A child can get lead poisoning by swallowing lead or breathing in lead dust, and only a small amount of lead is needed to harm a young, growing child.

If you have young children, or are pregnant, Sherlita Amler, M.D., Putnam County Commissioner of Health, recommends the following to help protect them from lead in their environment:

- Assume any home built before 1978 contains lead paint. Keep all painted surfaces in good condition. If you rent a home built before 1978, ask your landlord to repair any

peeling paint safely. If the landlord is not responsive, you can call your local building inspector or town clerk, listed in the phone book government blue pages.

- Before you repair peeling paint or do home renovations, call the Health Department to find out how to paint and repair safely. Safe work practices are key to keeping the home from filling up with lead dust.
- Pregnant women, babies and children should be kept away from any peeling, chipped paint or home repairs.
- If you have a job or hobby that involves working with lead, you should shower and change clothes and shoes before going home. Wash work clothes separately from other clothes.
- Wash your children's hands, face, toys, bottles, and pacifiers often.
- Feed your children foods that have calcium, iron, and Vitamin C. If your child breathes in or swallows lead, these foods will help lower the amount of lead that stays in your child's blood.

Since lead has been found in Mexican, Indian, and Middle Eastern pottery, painted china, leaded glass, crystal and pewter, these items should not be used to serve or store food. High levels of lead have also been found in some Ayurvedic medicines such as kohl, surma, greta, and azarcon. You can find a list of children's products that contain lead by going to the Consumer Product Safety Commissioner at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) or calling 800-638-2772.

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick. The only way to know if a child has lead poisoning is to get a blood lead test. In New York State, health care providers are required to test all children for lead at age one year, and again at age two years. For more information on how to prevent childhood lead poisoning, call the Putnam County Department of Health at 845-808-1335 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at: [www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead](http://www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead).