

ALLEN BEALS, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner of Health



MARYELLEN ODELL
County Executive

ROBERT MORRIS, P.E.
Director of Environmental Health

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
1 Geneva Road, Brewster, New York 10509
Phone # (845) 808-1390

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Barbara Iardi, Public Information Officer, (845)-808-1390

October 21-27 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week
Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future

Brewster, NY—Lead is a major environmental health threat for children and current research is showing that even low levels can cause harm. Most cases of poisoning in children result from ingesting and inhaling dust or chips from old, peeling lead paint in homes and buildings built before 1978. In Putnam County, approximately 30% of homes were built prior to 1978. National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, observed from October 21 to 27, helps raise awareness of this continuing problem which can affect a child's growth, behavior, and ability to learn.

“The problem is that lead dust can be invisible,” explains Allen Beals, MD, Commissioner of Health for Putnam County. “It is often generated during remodeling or renovation, when paint is scraped or sanded, but can be present at other times as well, settling on windowsills, floors and toys,” Dr. Beals continues.

Young children spend a lot of time on the floor and put things in their mouth, so frequent washing of hands, face, toys, bottles and pacifiers is very important. Lead can also harm babies before they are even born, if the pregnant mother is exposed. Good nutrition, with foods high in calcium, iron and vitamin C in particular, can limit the impact if lead is ingested or inhaled.

Most children with lead poisoning do not look or feel sick until much later in the course

of the illness. Nonetheless, damage may be occurring. The only way to know is to have a blood lead test. In New York State, health care providers are required to test all children for lead at age one, and again at two.

Tips for reducing lead exposure include:

- Assume any home built before 1978 contains lead paint. Keep all painted surfaces in good condition. Renters living in homes built before 1978 should ask landlords to safely repair any peeling paint. If the landlord is not responsive, local building inspectors or town clerks may be able to assist.
- Take the proper precautions before repairing peeling paint or performing home renovations. Call the Health Department for information on how to paint and repair safely. Safe work practices for renovations are key to preventing contamination in a home.
- Pregnant women, babies and children should avoid all peeling, chipped paint and home repairs.
- Avoid cooking, storing or serving food in leaded glass, crystal and pewter and painted china or pottery from Asia, Latin America or the Middle East.
- Individuals with jobs or hobbies with lead exposure should shower and change clothes and shoes before going home. Work clothes should be washed separately from other clothes.

A list of children's products that contain lead is available on the Consumer Product Safety Commission website at www.cpsc.gov or by calling 800-638-2772. For more information on how to prevent childhood lead poisoning, call the Putnam County Department of Health at 845- 808-1390 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at: www.nyhealth.gov/environmental/lead.

The mission of the health department is to improve and protect the health of the county's nearly 100,000 residents through prevention of illness and injury. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education.

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