Childhood Lead Poisoning

Children can get lead poisoning by breathing in or swallowing dust that contains lead. Unfortunately, lead exposure often goes unnoticed, as many report no symptoms or often appear generally healthy.

Lead dust is currently the main source of lead exposure among children. Lead is a naturally occurring metal, that can enter the bloodstream though ingestion and/or inhalation. Household dust can contain lead from cracked, chipped or peeling lead-based paint and tracked contaminated soil. Lead dust can also be created during home remodeling, renovation projects, or when lead-based paint is not removed safely. Most lead poisoning occurs when children lick, swallow, or breathe in dust from old lead paint. Most homes built before 1978 have old lead paint.

Children are at higher risk to the effects of lead because their bodies absorb more of it than adults. Lead exposure can result in difficulty learning, hearing issues, behavioral problems, slowed growth, and headaches. Younger children are also at an increased risk for lead exposure, as they often put objects or their hands in their mouth, that may contain lead contaminated dust or soil. Once a child's exposure to lead ceases, the amount of lead in the blood gradually decreases. The child's body releases some of the lead through sweat, urine, and feces; and although lead is stored in the bones, it can take decades for lead levels in bone to decrease.

Many things can affect how a child's body handles exposure to lead, including:

- Nutritional Status
- Length of time the child was exposed
- Presence of other underlying health conditions
- Child's age
- Source of lead exposure



You can help keep lead dirt and dust our of your home with these helpful tips:

- Wash hands often
- Keep shoes outside
- Mop floors and wetwipe surfaces
- Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter
- Wash toys

Foods that can help lower your child's lead levels



Tomatoes, strawberries, oranges, potatoes



Milk, cheese, yogurt



Chicken, steak, fish, peas, eggs

Protecting your family from lead poisoning



How can lead poisoning affect a child?

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed or delayed growth and development
- Learning disabilities
- Behavioral issues
- Seizures
- Hearing/Speech delays and/or issues
- Lower IQ
- Decreased ability to pay attention
- Underperformance in school

Adults are also at risk for lead exposure through their occupation such as mining, construction, manufacturing or welding. Hobbies with lead exposure are ceramics, stained glass, target shooting, and fishing.

If a person is exposed to lead during pregnancy, their developing baby can also be exposed-increasing the risk for miscarriage. Additional risks include:

- Negative impact on the baby's kidneys, nervous system, and brain
- Learning and/or behavioral problems
- Pre-term infant
- Low-birth weight

So, what should you do?

- **First, REMEMBER that lead exposure is preventable**! The most important step that parents/guardians and others can take, is to prevent exposure from occurring.
- **Second, contact your healthcare home Kaniksu Community Health TODAY for lead testing**!
  - How do we test for lead?
    - Your healthcare provider has a few options to detect lead poisoning in the blood
      - Finger-prick or heel-prick (capillary) sample is often the first step to determine if a child and/or person has lead in their blood. While finger-prick tests can provide fast results, they can also produce higher results if lead is on the skin is present. For this reason, an additional test is often utilized to confirm results
      - Venous Blood Draw-taken from the vein. Blood collected in this manner, is less likely to be contaminated with lead during the collection process.
  - What does the result of the lead test mean?
    - The Blood Lead Test, indicates how much lead is present in the blood, and is measured in micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (µg/dL). Any amount of lead in the blood indicates an exposure to lead has occurred, and may also indicate continuous exposure in their environment. CDC uses a blood-lead reference value of 3.5 µg/dL to identify levels higher than most, although no safe level of lead in children has been identified, and low levels of lead can still negatively impact a person's health.

Sources of Lead & How to Avoid Them

- Home
  - Chipped paint
  - Pewter
  - Old furniture & toys
  - Crystal glassware
  - Play or costume jewelry
- Imported Goods
  - Glazed pottery
  - Mexican candy(tamarindo or chili)
  - Asian, hispanic or Indian spices
- Beauty Products
  - Imported beauty products from Asia, India or Africa may contain led
- Jobs
  - Jobs such as car repairs, mining,construction and plumbing
  - Also, items brought home from such jobs including car batteries, scrap metal and ammunition
- Hobbies
  - Hunting, fishing, artist paints and refinishing furniture may all increase your risk of coming into contact with lead
- Travel outside the US
  - Souvenirs - including jewelry and toys
  - Spices or food