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## October 20-26, 2013 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Do you know what is colorless, odorless and tasteless, and affects nearly half a million children in the United States? If you thought of lead, you are correct. In fact, an elevated blood lead level higher than 5 micrograms per deciliter is harmful to children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention, the week of October 20-26, 2013 has been named National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, with the theme “Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future”.

Lead is a highly toxic metal that occurs naturally in the Earth’s crust. It can be found in contaminated soil, household dust, toys, drinking water, lead glazed pottery and some metal jewelry. However, lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the main sources for lead and can be found in most homes built before 1978. Lead can get into the body of a child when lead objects are placed in a child’s mouth or by breathing in particles of lead dust in the air. Children under the age of 6 are the most at risk for lead poisoning from any source.

Lead poisoning commonly builds up over time through repeated exposure to small amounts of lead. The symptoms of lead poisoning may include: abdominal pain and cramping, aggressive behavior, anemia, constipation, difficulty sleeping, headaches, irritability, loss of previous developmental skills, low appetite and energy and reduced sensations. Possible complications of lead poisoning include behavior and attention problems, failure at school, hearing problems, kidney damage, reduced IQ and slowed body growth. To determine if a child has lead poisoning, a simple blood test is administered.

To keep your child healthy, it is recommended that the following be done:

- Make sure your child does not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint.
- Create barriers between living/play areas and lead sources.
- Regularly wash children’s hands and toys; discard toys with chipping paint
- Prevent children from playing in bare soil; if possible, provide them with sandboxes.

Caregivers should wash the child’s hands after outdoor activity, before eating, and before going to bed. Children should not be allowed to play near major roads and bridges. Providing nutritious, low-fat meals that are high in iron and calcium is important, because these minerals help to prevent the absorption of lead.

**Remember:** even if your child *seems* healthy, ask their physician to test them for lead.

To obtain further information about this or any other public health concerns, contact the Central Connecticut Health District, serving the towns of Berlin, Newington, Rocky Hill and Wethersfield at (860) 721-2822 or by visiting our website at [www.ccthd.org](http://www.ccthd.org).