

# COOK COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week October 24-30

*Officials urging parents and physicians to have children tested.*

The Cook County Department of Public Health officials remind residents of the lead poisoning risks in our community and are supporting lead-poisoning prevention events with our partners in observance of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 24-30.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 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. Children under the age of six are especially vulnerable and should be tested for lead, especially if living in a home built before 1978. Ideally young children will get tested for lead 3 times before their 3rd birthday.

“Lead poisoning is completely preventable yet so many of our young children are diagnosed with lead poisoning each year and many will have lasting health effects,” said CCDPH chief operating officer Stephen A. Martin, Jr., Ph.D., M.P.H. “Parents need to understand the importance of having their children tested. Even though we’ve seen an increased number of providers testing this year compared to last, the need for increased testing remains.”

Lead-based paint used prior to 1978 in homes is still the most common source of lead exposure in children. Lead is a highly toxic metal that interferes with the body in many different ways and can be toxic to various organs. It only takes a small amount of lead to enter the body and cause permanent damage to the nervous system, which may affect behavior and learning development in children. Children in suburban Cook County who have elevated levels of lead in their blood will be referred to the health department for services.

Prevention tips for parents:

- If you rent a home that was built before 1978 and/or suspect your home has lead-based paint, inform your landlord or property management company of any peeling or chipping paint
- Keep children’s play area clean and dust-free
- Make sure your child washes his/her hands before eating
- Keep children away from peeling paint and/or avoid putting paint chips in their mouth
- Make sure your child eat nutritious foods high in iron and calcium

For more information about lead poisoning prevention, our services, and to learn about events during National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, please visit [www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org) or call 708-492-2000.

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