

October 2, 2024

For immediate release

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Bright Futures Begin Lead-Free, October 20-26 is National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week
PPHD is offering free lead testing for children and items of concern on October 10

Make sure to mark your calendars this year starting October 20 to celebrate National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW). Every year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week serves as a way to bring together individuals, organizations, industry, and Tribal, state and local governments to reduce childhood exposure to lead by increasing lead poisoning prevention awareness.

If you are concerned about your child's blood lead level, stop by the Panhandle Public Health District (PPHD) office in Scottsbluff on October 10, 2024, from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. to have your child's blood tested for free. You can also bring in items from your home that you might suspect contain lead such as toys, spices, tools, and even clothes to be tested for the presence of lead.

This year's theme for NLPPW, "Bright Futures Begin Lead-Free," focuses on creating bright futures for children and communities:

- Get the facts: Lead is still a problem in many communities. Learning about lead exposure and lead hazards can help protect you and your family.
- Get your child tested: A blood test is the best way to find out if your child has lead poisoning. Talk to your child's healthcare provider about getting a blood lead test if your child may have been exposed to lead.
- Get your home tested: Minimize your risk of lead exposure by hiring a certified professional to test your home for lead if it was built before 1978.

Lead poisoning occurs when lead builds up in the body, often over months or years. Even small amounts of lead can cause serious health problems. Children younger than 6 years are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning, which can severely affect mental and physical development.

Lead-based paint and lead-contaminated dust in older buildings, especially homes built before 1978, are common sources of lead poisoning in children. Other sources include contaminated air, water, and soil. Adults who work with batteries, do home renovations or work in auto repair shops also might be exposed to lead.

What are signs to look for regarding lead poisoning in children?

- Developmental delay
- Learning difficulties
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss
- Sluggishness and fatigue

- Stomach pain
- Vomiting
- Constipation
- Hearing loss
- Seizures
- Eating things, such as paint chips, that aren't food (pica)

Panhandle Public Health District has three state licensed Lead Abatement Risk Assessors on staff who can test your home for the presence of lead-based paint. PPHD can also check blood lead levels in children under six years of age.

If you cannot attend the free event on October 10th and are interested in having your house or work office tested for lead, or would like your child's blood lead level checked, please contact Melissa Haas at mhaas@pphd.ne.gov, Kendra Lauruhn at klauruhn@pphd.ne.gov, or Megan Barhafer at mbarhafer@pphd.ne.gov to set up appointments.

Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle community.

Sources:

<https://www.epa.gov/lead/national-lead-poisoning-prevention-week>