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# Hunterdon County Department of Health

[www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.html](http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.html)



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## **Hunterdon County Health Department Recognizes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week**

The Hunterdon County Health Department is recognizing National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW), October 24-30, 2021. NLPPW is an annual initiative sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to increase awareness of childhood lead poisoning prevention. Lead poisoning can affect nearly every system in a child's body, and lead poisoning is completely preventable despite the presence of lead in homes and the environment.

Commissioner Shaun C. Van Doren, liaison for the Hunterdon County Health Department, said, "In 2021, Hunterdon County is reporting an increase in children testing positive for elevated blood lead levels or lead poisoning in Hunterdon County.

There is no safe level of lead in a person's blood. Childhood exposure to lead may not show immediate or obvious symptoms but can affect long-term development and learning. Parents should be aware of possible sources of lead in their homes, prevent children from being exposed to those sources, and have their children tested for lead."

A simple blood test can detect lead. All children should have their blood tested for lead twice before the age of 6. Parents should speak to their pediatrician about blood lead testing or contact the Hunterdon County Health Department for testing. If tests reveal that a child's blood contains more than 5 mg/dl, the Hunterdon County Health Department will investigate the source of lead poisoning for the child. Public health nurses provide case management and health education and assist the family with medical treatment for the child as needed.

According to the CDC, lead can be found inside and outside the home, including in the water that travels through lead pipes or in the soil around the house. However, the most common source of exposure for children is from lead-based paint, which was used in many homes built before 1978. Adults and children can get lead into their bodies by breathing in lead dust (especially during activities such as renovations, repairs, or painting) or by swallowing lead dust that settles in food, food preparation surfaces, floors, windowsills, eating paint chips, soil that contains lead, or other places.

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Children can also become exposed to lead dust from adults' jobs or hobbies and from some metal toys or toys painted with lead-based paint. Children are not exposed equally to lead, nor suffer its consequences in the same way. These disparities unduly burden minority families and low-income families and their communities.

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, children are spending more time at home, where lead exposure is most likely. The pandemic also caused delays in new or ongoing lead repairs or remediations by property owners. The Health Department reminds parents that a simple blood test can detect lead and now is a good time to consult your healthcare provider to reschedule any missed appointments caused by the pandemic.

Childhood lead poisoning is preventable, and one of the primary programs of the public health nursing and environmental health programs at the County. Public Health Nurses work closely with the family, while Environmental Health Specialists test surfaces within the home for the presence of lead contaminants. The goal of the Lead Poisoning Prevention program is to identify and eliminate the presence of lead from the home of the poisoned child.

For more information about childhood lead poisoning prevention, blood lead testing, and safe renovation, visit the Hunterdon County Health Department website at <http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/health.htm> or call 908-788-1351.