

PRESS RELEASE
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DHHS Recognizes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week from October 21-27, 2018

Concord, NH – The New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Public Health Services (DPHS), Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (HHLPPP) is recognizing National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 21 - 27, 2018. HHLPPP, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is increasing awareness of childhood lead poisoning, prevention and the importance of screening young children for possible elevated blood lead levels.

"Childhood lead exposure is a significant issue in New Hampshire because of the large number of older homes that contain lead-based paint, the main source of exposure in children." said State Epidemiologist Dr. Benjamin Chan. "There is no safe level of lead in a person's blood. Childhood exposure to lead may not show immediate outward 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 one- and two-year-old children tested for lead."

Children who have been exposed to lead cannot avoid the negative impact on their health and development, and the effects can be permanent and continue into adulthood. Children are at greater risk for lead poisoning because of their smaller bodies and because their brains are in a continuous state of growth and development. Children's bodies and brains also absorb lead more easily and at a faster rate than adults, causing more physical and cognitive impairment from lead exposure than in adults.

New Hampshire is taking important steps in addressing the problem of childhood lead poisoning. In February 2018, Governor Sununu signed Senate Bill 247 into law which includes requirements to have one- and two-year-old children tested for elevated blood lead levels. This new requirement is consistent with the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation that all children be tested for possible lead exposure at one year of age and again at two years of age. Blood lead level tests are part of a Well Child Check visit and can often be completed with a finger-stick sample while a child is at the pediatric health care office.

The 8th Annual New Hampshire Healthy Homes Conference is being held today, Tuesday, October 23, at the Grappone Center in Concord with Dr. Kim M. Cecil, Professor of Radiology, Pediatrics, Neuroscience and Environmental Health, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical as the keynote speaker. Dr. Cecil is the lead imaging researcher for the Cincinnati Lead Study (CLS), the longest running longitudinal study of the long-term negative impact of childhood lead exposure in the world. Dr. Cecil and the Cincinnati Lead Study were featured in the PBS NOVA special report titled *Poisoned Waters* first aired in May 27, 2017, in which the water disaster in Flint was investigated. Her presentation, *Lead Astray: The Importance of Healthy Homes*, will

review the outcomes for CLS participants as they were followed into adulthood. The presentation includes expanded focus on why healthy home environments, free of lead paint hazards, are vitally important to supporting the health of New Hampshire's children and communities.

The Healthy Homes Conference also includes a presentation by Bill and Elizabeth Burr, a Dover, New Hampshire, couple whose four young children were recently poisoned. In their presentation titled *Our Family's Experience with Lead Poisoning: When Home is the Most Dangerous Place of All*, they share their personal story of how their recently-purchased home in Dover poisoned them and their four children with one child's blood lead level so high hospitalization for chelation treatment was required. They also share how their lives were turned upside-down as they realized what they thought they knew about the presence of lead hazards was hopelessly out of date and how the many people involved in the purchase of their home did not know or were incentivized not to mention these hazards. The blood lead level test at their daughter's Well Child Check made them aware that the whole family was being poisoned by lead. Additionally, they discuss how when looking up and down their street and around the neighborhood, they are now aware that this problem is all around us, and very few people are aware of the extent to which they and their children are at risk.

For more information about lead poisoning prevention, visit the DPHS website at <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/bchs/clpp/index.htm> and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead.

To view Dr. Kim Cecil/Cincinnati Lead Study segment from the PBS NOVA special report, visit PBS website at <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/video/poisoned-water>.

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