



St. Lawrence County Public Health Department

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Press Release

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National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 21st - October 27th

Canton, NY—The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department is pleased to announce the kick-off of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2019, October 21st–27th. The St. Lawrence County Public Health Department will host and participate in outreach and education activities designed to raise local awareness about the danger of lead exposure and poisoning, and educate parents on how to reduce exposure to lead in their environment, prevent its serious health effects, and learn about the importance of testing children for lead. Childhood lead poisoning is a growing concern in our communities as nearly 75% of homes in St. Lawrence County were built before lead-materials were banned and only a small fraction of our children are properly tested for lead.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week 2019 is a joint initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The goal is to encourage organized, local community events, and to empower families and other stakeholders to take action. “National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week has additional relevance to our community this year as St. Lawrence County has received a \$1 million Housing and Urban Development grant aimed at identifying and controlling lead-based paint hazards in eligible rented or privately owned homes,” according to St. Lawrence County Public Health Department Director, Dana Olzenak McGuire. “The County Public Health Department and Planning Office, and North Country Housing Council are already working together on this important work by identifying potential homes, reviewing applications, and selecting recipients.”

Although lead in gasoline and paint has been banned in the United States since the 1970s, lead exposure and poisoning is still a problem, especially for children. Lead is mostly found in lead-based paint, which was used in homes before 1978; however, it can also be found in the water that travels through lead pipes or in the soil around a house. Lead poisoning is caused by accidentally swallowing or breathing in the lead dust created by old paint that has cracked and chipped. Children are particularly at risk, often becoming lead poisoned by putting their hands or other lead-contaminated objects in their mouths, eating paint chips found in homes from peeling or flaking lead-based paint, or playing in lead-contaminated soil. According to the CDC, there is no known safe level of lead exposure, and even low levels can damage the brain and kidneys, as well as the reproductive, cardiovascular, circulatory, and immune systems. Lead is especially dangerous for children’s developing brains, causing decreased cognitive ability and attention span, impaired aptitude for learning, and increased risk for behavioral problems. However, the good news is that the problem is largely preventable with increased education and testing.

If you have questions, or would like more information on lead poisoning, please call the Public Health Department at 315-229-3433, and check out our website at:
<https://www.stlawco.org/Departments/PublicHealth/LeadScreeningProgram>.

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