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**HEALTH
DEPARTMENT**
of Northwest Michigan

www.nwhealth.org

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week: “Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future”

NORTHERN MICHIGAN – Nearly half a million children in the U.S. have elevated levels of lead in their blood, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). While anyone can suffer from lead poisoning, children between 6 months and 6 years of age are most at risk. No amount of lead exposure is considered safe.

The CDC, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) and the Health Department of Northwest Michigan are participating in National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 19-25. This year’s theme, “Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future”, underscores the importance of testing and protecting children from exposure.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan offers blood lead screening for children. Last year alone, the agency screened 935 children from Northern Michigan communities, according to Suzette Daly, Public Health Supervisor.

“Common sources of lead exposure in children are house dust contaminated by lead-based paint, and soil contaminated by leaded paint or by decades of industrial and motor vehicle emissions,” Daly explained.

Most children who have been exposed to lead do not act or look sick until levels are seriously elevated. Lead can often be found in homes built before 1978 that used lead-based paint, in contaminated soil and water, and in some products imported from other countries.

Elevated lead levels can cause serious health problems related to delays in growth and development, reduced IQ, behavior and attention difficulties, hearing loss and kidney damage. Though lead remains in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. Below are some simple things you can do to help protect your family:

- **Get your home tested.** Before you buy or rent an older home, ask about lead and have it inspected.
- **Get your children tested.** Even if your young children seem healthy, have them screened for elevated blood lead content. Discuss with your family physician, or contact the Health Department to schedule a screening. Call (800) 432-4121 for an appointment.
- **Visit the following sites** for more information: <http://www.Michigan.gov/lead>, <http://leadfreekids.org> , and <http://www/cdc.gov/>. You can also call (800) 424-LEAD.

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. Visit www.nwhealth.org or call (800) 432-4121 for more information.