



Jeb Bush
Governor

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Secretary, Department of Health

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lead poisoning prevention week is October 22-28, 2006
Good Nutrition May Help Prevent Lead Poisoning

Lead is a metal found in many things around us, such as water, paint, soil and dust. Lead is highly toxic to humans, especially young children. It can even be harmful to unborn babies.

Lead poisoning occurs when too much lead gets into the body. Lead poisoning is a serious but preventable health problem. Lead in the body stops good minerals such as iron and calcium from working right. Some of these effects may be permanent. Lead can affect almost every organ and system in your body. The main target for lead is the nervous system, both in adults and children.

You or your children may be exposed to lead by:

- Eating food or drinking water that contains lead. Water pipes in some older homes may contain lead that can leak out into the water.
- Children get lead into their bodies by breathing lead-contaminated dust or by putting their hands, toys or other objects with dust on them in their mouths. If your child eats dirt or other non-food objects, this may increase the chances of getting lead into his or her body
- Spending time in areas where lead-based paints have been used and are deteriorating. Homes built before 1978 could have lead based paint, and homes built before 1950 are even more likely to have interiors painted with lead based paint. Deteriorating lead paint can contribute to lead dust.
- Working in a job where lead is used or engaging in certain hobbies in which lead is used, such stained glass.
- Using health-care products or folk remedies that contain lead.
- Children can be exposed from eating lead-based paint chips or playing in contaminated soil.

A healthy diet can help keep you and your family stay ahead of lead.

Children with empty stomachs absorb more lead than children with full stomachs. So provide your child with a combination of four to six small meals or snacks during the day.

The following **nutrients** can help protect your child from the harmful effects of lead poisoning.

- **Iron.** Normal levels of iron work to protect the body from harmful effects of lead. Good sources of dietary iron include: Lean red meats, fish, chicken, turkey, iron-fortified cereals and whole-grain breads, dried fruits (raisins, figs, prunes) and greens such as collards, mustard, kale, turnips, spinach
- **Calcium** reduces lead absorption and helps make teeth and bones strong. Good sources of dietary calcium include: Milk and milk products (whole milk for children less than two years), cheese, yogurt and pudding, salmon, canned sardines, broccoli and greens such as collards, mustard, kale, turnips and spinach.

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- **Vitamin C** and iron-rich foods work together to reduce lead absorption. Good sources of vitamin C include: oranges, orange juice, grapefruit, grapefruit juice, tomatoes, tomato juice, green peppers, broccoli, cabbage, cantaloupe, strawberries, tangerines
- **High-fat foods** can make it easier for your child's body to absorb lead. Limit high-fat foods such as bacon, hot dogs, sausage, scrapple, fatback, French fries, potato chips and other types of chips

Also, **breastfeed** your baby. Even if you have been exposed to lead, it is usually okay for you to breastfeed. Discuss your concerns with your doctor.

Families can limit their risk of exposure to lead.

- Avoid exposure to sources of lead.
- Do not allow children to chew or mouth painted surfaces that may have been painted with lead-based paint.
- If you have a water lead problem, run water that has been standing overnight for 30 to 60 seconds drinking or cooking with it.
- Some types of paints and pigments that are used as make-up or hair coloring contain lead. Keep these kinds of products away from children
- If your home contains lead-based paint or you live in an area contaminated with lead, wash children's hands and faces often to remove lead dusts and soil, and regularly clean the house of dust and tracked in soil.
- If bottle nipples, pacifiers, "sippy" cups or small toys fall on the floor, wash them before using them again.
- Discard any food that falls on the floor.
- Never store food in opened cans. The cans may contain lead.
- Wash your and your children's hands often, especially before meals, naps and bedtime.

To find out more about lead poisoning, visit www.cdc.gov/lead or call the Pinellas County Health Department's epidemiology program at 727-824-6932.

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of our community through public and private partnerships in an environment that respects diversity. www.PinellasHealth.com