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GTCHD recognizes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) is pleased to recognize National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 24-30, 2021. Each year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) is a call to bring local awareness about the danger of lead exposure and poisoning, educate parents and communities on how to reduce exposure to lead in the environment, prevent its serious health effects, and learn about the importance of testing children for lead.

The GTCHD regularly educate clients of both the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) and Maternal and Child Health programs, explaining the risks of lead exposure and how to prevent it, including encouragement to maintain appointments with their pediatrician who will perform a blood lead test at ages one and two years. In 2020, the GTCHD's Blood Lead program handled 18 cases of suspected lead poisoning, working with local pediatric (or pediatrician) offices in following statewide re-testing guidelines and recommended follow-up, along with coordinating nurse case management support.

About 3.3 million American households, including 2.1 million low-income households, have children under 6 years of age who live in homes with lead exposure hazards. Even relatively low levels of lead exposure can impair a child's cognitive development. Children with blood lead levels can experience delayed growth and development, damage to the brain and nervous system, learning and behavior problems, and a host of other health-related problems. Public health actions are needed for these children. **There is no safe blood lead level in children.**

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, window sills, eating paint chips, soil that contains lead, or other places.

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.

If your child has been diagnosed with elevated blood lead levels or you have concerns about lead in your home, contact your local Health Department office for additional information and resources. GTCHD has a Registered Nurse case navigator to assist families with support, education, and healthcare navigation. For questions, call 231-995-6111. Additional information and resources about lead poisoning can be found at: www.gtcountymi.gov/633 and www.michigan.gov/mileadsafe.

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