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Prevent. Promote. Protect.
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National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 23-29

Lead Poisoning is Preventable; The Winnebago County Lead-Safe Homes Program Can Help.

OSHKOSH, Wis. (October 24, 2022) – Each year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is a call to bring together individuals, organizations, and state and local governments to reduce childhood exposure to lead. Lead is toxic, especially in young children. Even low levels of lead in a child's blood can result in damage to the brain and nervous system, learning and behavior problems, slow growth and development, and hearing and speech problems.

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, and especially in those built before 1960. Children can be exposed by swallowing or breathing in lead dust created by old paint that has cracked and chipped, eating paint chips, or chewing on surfaces coated with lead dust or lead-based paint, such as window sills. The most common source of lead exposure in young children is lead dust that they swallow after placing lead-contaminated hands or other objects in their mouths. Lead can also be found in some toys and jewelry, or adults may bring lead into the home if they work with lead-based products, such as stained glass.

Children who are lead poisoned typically do not look or act sick. Therefore, the only way to know if a child is lead poisoned is to have a blood lead test. Parents should talk with their child's health care provider about the risk of lead exposure and ask for a blood lead test if children are under age six. When a lead level of 3.5 micrograms per deciliter or higher is reported in Winnebago County, the health department works with the family to help eliminate the lead exposure.

"Lead is poisonous to all of us, and is especially damaging to a child's brain and their development," said Doug Gieryn, Winnebago County Health Department Director/Health Officer. "Through new state and federal funding, our health department can help reduce lead exposure in homes and increase safe housing options in our communities."

The Winnebago County Health Department is working to eliminate lead hazards with its [Lead-Safe Homes Program](#). This new state and federally funded program helps pay for the safe removal of lead from homes and rental properties. The health department works directly with home owners and contractors to coordinate a risk assessment and remove lead hazards. If a home qualifies for the program, up to 100 percent of the lead abatement costs could be covered. Lead-safe repairs may include new windows, siding, doors, painting, gutters and other lead hazard repairs.

The Winnebago County Health Department is currently accepting applications for their Lead-Safe Homes Program. Homeowners and landlords who live in properties built before 1978 are encouraged to apply. If you are a renter, talk with your landlord and encourage them to apply. Properties that meet the following criteria are eligible:

- Children or pregnant women live in or regularly visit the home.
- Child or pregnant woman are eligible for Medicaid or BadgerCare Plus.
- The home or rental property was built before 1978.
- The property is insured and taxes are up to date.

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The health department is also looking for qualified companies to complete lead risk assessments and lead abatement work. If you are a state-certified lead abatement or investigation company, or if you would like to become one, contact the Winnebago County Health Department. Grants are available for training.

If you do not qualify for the Lead-Safe Homes Program, but you would like a lead hazard risk assessment, you can find a certified inspector or risk assessor on the [United States Environmental Protection Agency's website](#) or call the National Lead Information Center at 1-800-424-LEAD. Ask your landlord to have your home or apartment tested if you rent. To find out if you have lead in your drinking water, contact your water company and ask about testing.

For more information about lead poisoning or the [Lead-Safe Homes Program](#), contact the Winnebago County Health Department at 920-232-3000 or visit www.winnebagopublichealth.org.

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