Childhood Lead Poisonings Increase in Iowa

The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) reports the number of childhood lead poisoning cases in Iowa is increasing. Between June, 2009 and September, 2009, most of the cases investigated by IDPH-certified lead inspectors resulted from homeowners renovating, remodeling, or making unsafe repairs to their pre-1978 homes. “In this economy, many Iowans are choosing to invest in their older homes by remodeling,” said Kevin Officer, Environmental Specialist Senior with the IDPH Bureau of Lead Poisoning Prevention. “It’s important remodelers follow lead-safe practices to protect young children from lead poisoning.”

Of the childhood lead poisonings investigated by IDPH-certified inspectors, 75 percent (12 out of 16) were exposed to lead from home remodeling projects. The actual number of lead poisoning cases is most likely much higher, as IDPH inspectors only service 30 percent of Iowa counties. The remaining 70 percent of Iowa counties are serviced by local childhood lead poisoning prevention programs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), lead poisoning is one of the most common and preventable pediatric health problems today. Childhood lead poisoning has significant effects on the health of children and the community. Lead has adverse effects on nearly all organ systems in the body. It is especially harmful to the developing brains and nervous systems of children under the age of six years. At very high blood lead levels, children can have severe brain damage or even die. Statewide, the prevalence of lead poisoning among children under the age of six years is 7 percent. This is more than four times the national average of 1.6 percent.

- Lead-safe work practices recommended by IDPH include: Remove lead-based paint carefully. You should never dry scrape or dry sand lead-based paint on the inside or outside of your home. Always mist surfaces with water before scraping or sanding them.
- Use a tarp or piece of plastic to catch paint chips when you are working on the outside of your house. This will keep paint chips from falling on the soil. If you are working outside, close windows to prevent lead dust from entering the home.
- Cover the floor and furniture that cannot be removed from the room with a sheet of plastic. Seal each room from the rest of the house with plastic while working on it.
- Keep pregnant women and children out of the room if you are working on a small project. For larger projects, keep pregnant women and children out of the house until you complete the job.
- After you complete the job, wash all surfaces thoroughly with any household detergent. Vacuum with a HEPA vacuum or a regular vacuum with micro filter bags.
Place paint chips, dust and pieces of wood in a plastic bag at the end of each day. Put this with your garbage that will go to the landfill.

For more information about lead poisoning, visit [www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/lead_poisoning_prevention.asp](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/lead_poisoning_prevention.asp) or call 800-972-2026. 800-972-2026.

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