



WILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT & COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

For Immediate Release

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News media calls to Vic Reato: Media Services Manager at (815)727-5088.

Agency Website: www.willcountyhealth.org

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES BLOOD LEAD SCREENING DURING LEAD POISONING PREVENTION WEEK

JOLIET – A simple blood test can prevent a lifetime spoiled by the irreversible damage caused by lead poisoning, but many of the most vulnerable among us never get tested.

Lead is a highly toxic heavy metal capable of causing kidney damage, mental retardation, high blood pressure, hearing loss, and a variety of other debilitating maladies. Lead poisoning occurs when excessive amounts of the element are absorbed into the body, and young children are most often the victims.

The major source of lead exposure for children (particularly those under six years old), is lead-based paint and contaminated dust found in deteriorating buildings. Children from all socioeconomic backgrounds are potentially susceptible, but urban residents and minorities are at greatest risk because they most often live in older housing.

The only way to determine if a child has become poisoned by lead is through a blood test. The testing is readily available, but only about 10 per cent of high-risk Will County children ever gets tested.

According to federal estimates, there are approximately 24 million housing units in the U.S. contaminated by lead-based paint or toxic dust. More than four million of these dwellings are home to one or more young children.

The Will County Health Department's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program offers a wide range of free screening and testing services for eligible area families. Visit the Division of Family Health Services section at www.willcountyhealth.org for information about lead poisoning prevention services available through the Health Department. You may also telephone 815-727-8830 for information about blood lead screening. For information in Spanish, telephone 815-727-8501.

National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week begins October 24. The theme for the annual public awareness campaign is "Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future." If you believe your family could be at an



Public Health
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elevated risk for lead poisoning, consult a health care provider or the Health Department to learn about screening, treatment, and prevention strategies.

Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. To request a blood lead test for a Will County child, telephone 815-727-8501.

To reach the National Lead Information Center, telephone 800-424-5323.