



Paul A. Pettit, MSL, CPH
Public Health Director

**GENESEE COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
3837 West Main Street Rd.
Batavia, NY 14020
(585) 344-2580 x5555

**ORLEANS COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
14016 State Route 31, Suite 101
Albion, NY 14411
(585) 589-3278

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Kaitlin Pettine, MPH
Public Health Educator/Public Information Officer
Kaitlin.Pettine@co.genesee.ny.us
Paul Pettit, MSL
Public Health Director

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Exposure to Lead Increases during Spring and Summer

Lead is a heavy metal that is toxic to our bodies and there is no safe level of lead to have in our blood. Lead can be found in homes built before 1978 (before lead in paint was banned), gasoline, water pipes, toys, ceramics, jewelry, pottery, and more.

The effects of lead poisoning are irreversible and can affect a child into adulthood. “Lead poisoning can affect anyone, but it is especially dangerous for infants and small children because their bodies are rapidly developing,” stated Paul Pettit, Director for the Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). Childhood lead poisoning can damage the brain and nervous system leading to learning difficulties, lower IQ, difficulty in paying attention, hyperactivity, kidney damage, and, at very high levels, it can be fatal. Lead poisoning can also be dangerous for pregnant women because lead can pass to the baby during pregnancy.

Childhood lead poisoning is a concern throughout the year, but cases of lead poisoning increase during the spring and summer months because children spend more time outdoors, on the porch or in the yard. Homes built before 1978 may have chipping and peeling lead paint on the porch or on siding, which could be more deteriorated than other parts of the house due to the effects of weather. Children playing on the porch can unknowingly pick up lead paint chips and dust on their hands and toys and then place hands or toys into their mouths.

Lead dust can also be found in the soil outside where children are playing. Strong winds can blow lead dust from nearby factories or from the chipped paint off houses and then settle into your yard. Although leaded gasoline was phased out in the 1970’s, lead may still be in the soil after it was released into the air from car exhausts and then settled into the ground nearby.

Lastly, many home improvements begin in the spring and summer. Renovations to areas of the home containing lead-based paint can put lead dust into the air, both inside

and outside of the area being worked on. Lead dust can also collect on windowsills and in window wells. On warm days when the window is open, lead dust in these areas can blow into the house.

“Lead poisoning in children is completely preventable,” stated Pettit. “You can follow these steps to protect yourself and your family from the effects of lead exposure.”

- Talk to your doctor about a simple blood lead test. New York State requires that health care providers test children for lead at ages 1 and 2 and whenever there is a risk of lead exposure.
- Wash children’s hands before eating and naps or bedtime.
- Wash children’s toys regularly.
- Have children play in a sandbox, rather than on the ground.
- Clean floors with a wet mop and cleaning solution.
- Wet-wipe dusty areas such as windowsills, window wells, countertops, and furniture.
- Keep your home free of chipping or peeling paint and renovate safely.
- Mist surfaces with water before scraping or sanding to prevent creating dust.
- Have your children eat a balanced diet rich with iron, vitamin C and calcium.

For more information on GO Health’s Lead Poisoning Prevention Programs, visit GOHealthNY.org. You can also contact your respective health department:

- Genesee County- 585-344-2580 or Health.GOlead@co.genesee.ny.us
- Orleans County- 585-589-3278 or OCPublicHealth@orleanscountyny.gov

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