



# News Release

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Contact: Catherine Cioffi**  
**Communications Director**  
**Office - (914) 995-2932**  
**Cell- (914) 954 -5579**  
[CCioffi@westchestergov.com](mailto:CCioffi@westchestergov.com)

## **COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT LEAD EXPOSURE IN CHILDREN**

### ***Lead Poisoning Prevention Week Observed October 20 Through 26***

(White Plains, NY) — Westchester County Executive George Latimer reminds families during Lead Poisoning Prevention Week to assure their children are protected from the harmful effects of lead exposure at home, and anywhere they spend lots of time.

Latimer said: “I encourage all Westchester families to ask their child’s healthcare provider about lead risk assessment and testing for their children. Families should identify and safely remove sources of lead from their homes to prevent exposure, and can learn more about lead safety during home renovations on the County website. Paint that peels, chips or cracks in homes built before 1978 can be hazardous.”

The County Health Department recognizes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week to raise awareness about the dangers of lead so families can reduce childhood exposure. Lead is a toxic mineral that can decrease learning ability, cause permanent and irreversible cognitive loss and lead to behavioral problems. Children ages six months to six years old should have a lead assessment every year by their medical provider, and by New York State law, all children who are one and two years old are required to receive a blood lead test.

Health Commissioner Dr. Sherlita Amler said: “There is no safe level of lead and its health effects can be devastating. If you are concerned that your home may contain lead paint and you are pregnant or have young children, contact the Health Department at 914-813-5240 to arrange a free inspection. We will work with you to help you keep lead away from your children. If your children have been exposed to lead, the Health Department helps to identify the source of their exposure, and to correct it or move children to a safer place.”

When families have a child who has been exposed to lead, Amler said families can help by keeping all provider appointments to assess their child’s progress in reducing that blood lead level, and working with Health Department staff. To learn how to keep children safe from lead, watch this Health Department video in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

Amler said: “While the most common source of lead poisoning is chipped or peeling paint, there are also other sources of lead poisoning such as toys, glazed pottery, cosmetics and home remedies. Our staff works with families to identify the lead risks where the child lives and spends time so these risks can be removed, remediated or contained. Working together, we can achieve the best outcomes for Westchester’s children.”

The Westchester County Health Department’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program shares information with families and pregnant women on how to prevent lead poisoning, notifies the families of children whose blood lead level meets the lowest state threshold for concern, explains the dangers of lead exposure and recommends ways to reduce it.

For the year ending September 30, 184 children were identified as having been exposed to lead, down from 192 during the prior 12 months. The County Health Department is currently following the progress of 256 children with lead exposure.

About 500,000 American children between ages one and five have elevated levels of lead in their blood, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The top sources of lead in Westchester, from most frequent to least, are:

- Flaking or peeling lead-based paint in homes built before 1978
- Old painted wooden windows
- Lead dust on window sills, floors and toys
- Stained glass windows or casement windows with lead came (dividers)
- Ceramic pottery from other countries, particularly in Latin America, India and the Middle East
- And less frequently:
- Herbal medicines from the Middle East, Latin America, China and India
- Candy and spices from Mexico, the Middle East, Latin America, India and China
- Cosmetics from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Middle Eastern and African countries
- Costume jewelry and toys made in other countries and often sold in dollar and discount stores

Property owners of single-family or multi-family homes throughout Westchester are encouraged to [apply for the County’s Lead Safe Westchester \(LSW\) Program](#), made possible by a grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The LSW Program provides **FREE** improvements and repairs to reduce lead-based paint, dust and other safety hazards in housing units, built before 1978 where residents with low to moderate incomes reside. Priority is given to units housing children under the age of six, and/or units where a pregnant woman lives. Funds are awarded on a first come, first served basis, based on the occupants’ eligibility and on a home inspection that determines the presence of lead. To request an application, property owners, landlords and tenants call 914-995-4402 or e-mail [kqte@westchestergov.com](mailto:kqte@westchestergov.com).

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