

GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT RAISES AWARENESS ABOUT CHILDHOOD LEAD HAZARDS *Westchester Observes National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week*

(White Plains, NY) – In recognition of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 21-27, Westchester County Executive George Latimer is encouraging all parents and caregivers to learn how to reduce children’s exposure to lead to prevent its serious health effects.

Latimer said: “Lead poisoning can be prevented as long as we keep children from coming into contact with lead. When you rent, buy or renovate a home, lead safety should be a key consideration. Get the facts, get your home tested and get your young children screened and tested for lead exposure.”

Lead is a toxic mineral that can cause damage to the brain and other vital organs, and can cause decreased learning and behavior problems.

All children, from six months to six years old, should be assessed annually by their medical provider. According to New York State law, all children who are 1 and 2 years old must receive a blood lead test.

About 500,000 American children between ages 1 and 5 have elevated levels of lead in their blood, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. At the end of 2017, 76 Westchester County children with elevated levels of lead in their blood were receiving medical and environmental case management from the Westchester County Health Department. So far this year, 22 children were newly identified as needing these services.

Commissioner of the Westchester County Health Department Sherlita Amler, MD said: “Most lead poisoning happens at home or in places where children spend a lot of time. In older homes, soil in the yard, paint on the walls, window sills and doorways are likely to contain lead. Lead tastes sweet, which is why young children will lick lead-lined windows or chew or suck on objects that contain lead. To keep children safe, frequently

wipe down window sills, floors and toys and make sure your children don't put dirt, paint chips or other objects in their mouths."

Residents of Yonkers (10701 and 10705), New Rochelle (10801), White Plains (10606) or Mount Vernon (10550) can contact the Health Department for a free home inspection and risk assessment for lead paint hazards. To schedule a free home assessment in these neighborhoods, call 914-813-5139. This service is available through grant funding specific for these communities.

Here's how to protect your child from becoming lead poisoned:

- Wash your child's hands often before nap time, meals and bedtime.
- Wet dust and wet mop your home. Throw away the wet paper towel after dusting.
- Take appropriate precautions when starting [remodeling projects](#).
- Feed your child a diet high in whole wheat breads, eggs, meat, milk, yogurt, cheese and dark green vegetables, all of which can help their bodies fight off lead poisoning.

Be aware of these common sources of lead exposure in children:

- Flaking or peeling lead-based paint in homes built before 1978
- Lead dust on window sills, floors and toys
- Plumbing pipes in homes built before 1985
- Soil around homes and buildings with exterior lead-based paint
- Ceramic pottery from other countries, particularly in Latin America, India and the Middle East
- Imported herbal medicines from the Middle East, Latin America, China and India
- Imported candy and spices from Mexico, the Middle East, Latin America, India and China
- Imported cosmetics from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Middle Eastern and African countries
- Imported costume jewelry and toys made in other countries and often sold in dollar and discount stores

During the 12-month period that ended September 30, 105 apartments or houses were remediated and made lead safe, and the Health Department's Childhood Lead Primary Prevention Program staff performed 252 housing assessments. Throughout the year, the Health Department educates parents and providers about the dangers of lead exposure; monitors blood lead level data to identify children at risk for lead exposures; conducts investigations in homes and other places to identify lead hazards and works to remediate those hazards; and collaborates with health care providers to reduce elevated blood levels in children.

To learn more about lead safety, go to <https://health.westchestergov.com/lead-poisoning-prevention>.

About Westchester County

Westchester County, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. Originally home to Native Americans, who were members of the Lenape tribe, it is today a rich mix of many cultures and landscapes. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester is made up of 6 cities, 19 towns and 20 villages. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Using inclusion and openness as a foreground, Latimer is fighting to make Westchester a destination for all people to live, work and enjoy. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting www.westchestergov.com

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