



**For Immediate Release:**

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## **Promote Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future** National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is October 20-26

LOS ANGELES – In observance of National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health today joined with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in encouraging parents to learn about the many ways they can reduce their child’s exposure to lead and prevent its serious health effects. This year’s theme, “Lead-Free Kids for a Healthy Future,” emphasizes the importance of preventing lead exposure for healthy growth and development.

“In 2010, 7,300 children in Los Angeles County had elevated blood-lead levels, which is entirely preventable,” said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. “Lead can seriously affect a child’s brain and nervous system and may cause learning and behavioral problems. A blood lead test is the only way to identify and confirm elevated lead levels in children.”

According to the CDC, an estimated 535,000 children in the United States have blood-lead levels high enough to be a cause for concern. In 2012, the CDC lowered the blood lead level of concern from 10 mcg/dL to 5 mcg/dL. The main cause of lead poisoning in Los Angeles County children is exposure to peeling lead-based paint. Lead-based paint is commonly found in houses, apartments, and buildings built before 1978. Dust from the deteriorating paint can settle on toys, windowsills, and floors, and children can swallow this dust or paint chips.

Other sources of lead exposure could be:

- Ground soil that has been contaminated by lead paint, lead dust, or leaded gasoline;
- Lead dust that comes into the home on work clothes or work boots;
- Folk or traditional remedies, such as Azarcón and Greta;
- Various imported goods, such as toys, candy, ceramics, and children’s jewelry;
- Hobbies using items that contain lead, such as soldering, making stained glass, and handling bullets or fishing sinkers.

“If you have young children and are concerned that your home may have lead-based paint or other sources of lead exposure, get the facts,” Dr. Fielding said. “Public Health can provide information on sources of lead poisoning and, if necessary, referrals to certified lead inspectors through the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Hotline at 1-800-LA-4-LEAD.”

Parents who are concerned about their children’s exposure to lead are urged to ask their child’s doctor about lead testing. Parents who do not have a doctor for their child can also call the hotline for referrals to free and low-cost health services for children and teens.



# Public Health News

All parents and caregivers of young children are invited to learn how to protect their children from this silent and serious environmental threat. If you would like free materials, information about upcoming Family Place Workshops or have questions about lead poisoning prevention, please call 1-800-LA-4-LEAD or visit us online at <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/lead>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, find us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: @LAPublicHealth.

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