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GCHD and MDHHS Partner to Issue Guidance to Flint Parents, Providers

FLINT, Mich. – In a joint effort to continue informing the community about lead exposure, the Genesee County Health Department (GCHD) and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) next week will issue letters to parents and the provider community in Flint to assist in providing guidance to support families.

In response to the elevated blood lead levels found in some Flint children, GCHD and MDHHS have worked together closely to develop guidance for families and providers.

Routine lead testing should be part of a well-child visit at ages one and two. “This is a good time to check with your healthcare provider to make certain your child has been tested at the recommended times and if not have the test performed,” said Dr. Gary Johnson, Medical Director, Genesee County Health Department.

Parents will be provided information regarding lead testing, how to reduce lead exposure for your family, where lead comes from, and community and state resources for more information. Children can be exposed to lead from drinking water in lead pipes, old lead paint, soil, pottery, cosmetics, toys and some home remedies. Adult jobs and hobbies, like auto repair, stained glass and jewelry making, and ammunitions handling can also put children at risk if they touch clothing or play in areas where lead is found.

“As we continue to find ways to inform and guide the Flint community toward reducing lead exposures, we are appreciative of the collaboration with the Genesee County Health Department,” said Dr. Eden Wells, Chief Medical Executive with MDHHS. “Parents and providers can take a number of steps to help reduce exposure, identify signs of lead poisoning, and begin follow up care as needed. Working together we can all help to protect the health of families in Flint.”

Primary care providers can assist in helping to ensure that children and families exposed to lead receive the care and resources they need to manage the potential health impacts of lead poisoning. MDHHS and GCHD worked with Dr. Mona Hanna-Attisha of the Hurley Medical Center to develop testing protocols and guidance regarding identification of lead poisoning, management of elevated blood lead levels, follow-up care, and community and state resources.

GCHD and MDHHS are issuing the following recommendations for parents:

- Families who live in the City of Flint and are on the Flint water system or who attend school, childcare, or spend time with a caregiver in the City of Flint, are encouraged to get their children tested for lead poisoning at their doctor's office or the GCHD.
- Families can get their water tested for lead for free. Call 810-787-6537 for details about how.
- Families are encouraged to use an NSF Certified water filter in their home, and free filters are still available. Call 2-1-1 for information about where to pick up a free filter.
- Run only cold water through the filter.
- Use filtered or bottled water for drinking (including making coffee, drink mixes, juice, baby formula), and cooking (even if you boil the water, the lead will stay in the water and food).
- You can use unfiltered tap water for washing your hands, and washing dishes. If you must use unfiltered water for drinking or cooking, run the tap for five minutes before using the water.
- Safe cleaning can also reduce the risk of lead exposure in the home. You can use unfiltered tap water to wipe down countertops, mop floors, and wash clothes.
- Keep children away from lead paint and dust; use wet paper towels to clean up lead dust around windows, play areas and floors; and wash hands and toys often, using soap and water
- Lastly, always wash fruits with filtered water. Some foods help keep lead from being stored in the child's body, such as calcium rich foods, iron rich foods, and foods with vitamin C.

GCHD and MDHHS will continue to provide more information to the community regarding reducing lead exposure and protecting the health of Flint residents. For more information, visit www.michigan.gov/lead.

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