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For Immediate Release

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Keep Kids Safe from Lead During National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is reminding families about the dangers of lead and how to protect children during National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week, October 25–31, 2026. This year's theme is “Keep Kids Safe from Lead.” It focuses on three important steps: get the facts, get your child tested and get your home tested.

Lead can be found in places where children live, learn and play. Children younger than 6 are at greater risk because their bodies and brains are still growing. Lead can affect a child's learning, attention and development.

Children who have been exposed to lead may not look or act sick. **A blood lead test is the best way to know if a child has been exposed.**

Lead is also a local concern. During fiscal year 2025, 247 children were screened for lead by healthcare providers in the SWNPHD district. That is up from 187 children the year before. SWNPHD investigated 10 cases of children with elevated blood lead levels.

“Lead exposure is something we can prevent,” said Myra Stoney, Health Director at Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “Testing children and knowing where lead may be found are simple steps families can take to help keep their children safe and healthy.”

Lead can be found in many places. One of the most common sources is old lead-based paint and the dust it creates in homes built before 1978. Lead may also be found in soil, drinking water that passes through some types of plumbing, and certain imported products. Some jobs and hobbies can also expose people to lead that may be brought into the home.

Families can take simple steps to lower the risk of lead exposure. Keep floors and windowsills clean and free of dust. Wash children's hands and toys often. Watch for peeling or damaged paint, especially in older homes. If you are repairing or remodeling a home built before 1978, use lead-safe work practices.

Parents and caregivers should talk with their child's healthcare provider about lead testing. SWNPHD offers free blood lead screening for children ages 1–5 at the McCook and Ogallala offices. Appointments are required.

If a child has an elevated blood lead level, SWNPHD can help the family look for possible sources of lead and learn ways to prevent more exposure. SWNPHD also has a Lead Hazard Reduction Program that helps qualifying families find and reduce lead-based paint hazards in their homes.

“Get the facts. Get your child tested. Get your home tested,” continued Stoney. “Lead Poisoning Prevention Week is a good time for families to learn about lead and take steps to protect their children. Learning about lead and taking action early can help protect children from lead exposure.”

For more information about lead prevention, blood lead screening or SWNPHD's Lead Hazard Reduction Program, contact SWNPHD at 308-345-4223 or visit swhealth.ne.gov. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. Follow @swnphd on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

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