

Let's Get the Lead Out: A New Parish Project

**Sponsored by All Saints Formation Commission
in conjunction with Creative Spirit Ministry**

This past year has been a challenge for our faith community, praying for the end of a world-wide pandemic and the health and well-being of our community. During this time period, Pope Francis has implored us to help end environmental injustice. As we begin again to open our parish community, we are beginning to engage in a response to his call for action.

Milwaukee is identified by Wisconsin's Department of Health as having a serious problem with lead poisoning in our children. We are working with the Milwaukee City Health Department to raise awareness of this problem, educate the community on the scope of this problem, its health effects on our children, and what we can do about it.

Lead Poisoning Facts

- Lead is a natural element found in our environment. Once used in gasoline, paint, pipes, plumbing materials, batteries, ceramics, jewelry, cosmetics.
- There is no safe level of lead in the human body.
- Primary sources of elevated levels in Milwaukee: lead based paint and leaded household dust, especially around windows.
- Secondary sources: soil, drinking water, imported jewelry, toys, antiques, imported dishes, and traditional "folk" remedies. Can also come from jobs or hobbies where lead is involved.
- Children under the age of 6 are most vulnerable; their growing bodies absorb more lead than adults. Their brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to the damaging effects of lead poisoning. They can be more exposed because their hands and objects often end up in their mouths.
- Adults can also be exposed to lead. A major concern is for pregnant women because lead can affect the developing baby.
- There are often no signs of lead exposure. Children can have elevated lead levels and not look or act sick. The only way to know is through testing.

- Milwaukee Health Department recommends all children be tested three times before the age of three. Some may need to be tested up to the age of six. Living in houses built before 1978 with recent or ongoing renovation increases the risk.
- Lead exposure, even low levels, harm developing brains and bodies of infants and young children leading to:
 - decreased intelligence or ability to learn,
 - increased behavioral problems,
 - impaired school performance,
 - increased juvenile delinquency,
 - increased childhood health problems such as speech and language delays, hearing problems, kidney damage, seizures and, rarely, death.

Lead Exposure Prevention

- Keep children from coming into contact by controlling and removing hazards from their environment.
- Make sure areas they live and/or play in are free from lead dust by using a damp cloth to remove dust around windows.
- Remove peeling paint chips from walls, ceilings, soil.
- Keep unsafe objects out of childrens' reach.

From: <https://city.milwaukee.gov/Health/Services-and-Programs/HomeEnvironmentalHealth/Lead-Poisoning-Facts#>

Testing Coverage

All health insurance covers lead poisoning tests done by doctors in private practice. As required, doctors must report elevated blood levels to the City Health Department for follow-up. In addition, City WIC clinics provide testing and also report elevated levels for follow-up by the City Health Department.

For More Information on testing Call the Milwaukee Health Department 's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 414-286-2165.

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