



Lead Poisoning

There are many myths about lead poisoning. Lead poisoning does not only affect poor families or is only caused by children eating paint chips. It is usually the result of leaded dust (often invisible) created by chipping, peeling or flaking paint in older homes and rental units. Lead poisoning is most harmful to children under the age of six and pregnant women. When lead dust is ingested or inhaled, it enters your body and can cause serious health problems. Lead poisoning is invisible; the only way to know a child is lead poisoned is to do a blood test.

Lead poisoning has been associated with attention deficit disorder (ADD), learning disabilities, violent behavior, mental retardation, hearing loss, reduction of motor control/balance and convulsions.

Symptoms are difficult to detect until the child is seriously poisoned. Some poisoned children may experience headaches, irritability, excessive sleeping, clumsiness and loss of interest. Other symptoms include abdominal pain/cramps, hyperactivity, sporadic vomiting and seizures.

The greatest risk of lead poisoning comes from deteriorating lead based paint in older housing. Houses and apartments built before 1978 have a high risk of containing lead paint. The greatest risk is in units built before 1950.

You should look for chipping, peeling or flaking paint on interior and exterior walls, window sills, wells and frames, door frames, ceilings, wooden trim, floors and porches. Lead dust is most often created by opening and closing old windows and doors.

Frequent hand washing is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of lead poisoning. The harmful effects of lead poisoning are permanent. The only CURE is prevention.

If you are planning any repairs or renovation to your home that will disturb paint, call the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning in Baltimore at (410)534-6447 or visit www.lead-safe.org for more information.

*Health Ministry
Bethlehem African Methodist Episcopal Church
Reverend Marietta Ramsey, Pastor*