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NEWS FOR RELEASE: Immediately

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## Worried about lead in your water? In Alameda County look beyond

OAKLAND, Calif. – The drinking water crisis in Flint, Michigan and recently the news about lead contamination at Healdsburg Elementary School and Anthony Chabot Regional Park here in the bay area has many parents wondering “Is my family’s tap water polluted with lead?”

In Alameda County you will be relieved to know that the answer is most likely “No.” The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and California Department of Public Health have a threshold of 15 parts per billion in water. That’s the level at which lead contamination in your water becomes a concern. However, the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program in the Alameda County Healthy Homes Department (ACHHD) has regularly found water, at the highest, to be 7 ppb in the testing done since the Program was established in 1991.

**What is important for you to know is if you live in Alameda County you are more likely to become lead poisoned by exposure to lead based paint in houses or contaminated soil than by our tap water. Over 5,500 children in Alameda County have been reported with lead poisoning over the last 10 years!**

Many homes built before 1978 have layers of older paint on them. Those layers were brushed on or sprayed on at a time when lead was added to paint to make the paint last longer. These homes may have been painted over since then but as they age the older layers become exposed. When lead-based paint deteriorates, it can create lead hazards: chipping or peeling paint, lead dust (which can get on children’s hands and toys), and contaminate the soil.

**Most children do not consume the soil the way they do water but kids often play in the dirt and then touch their mouths ingesting some soil which if contaminated can result in lead poisoning. Over 82% of housing in Oakland and 70% of housing countywide was built before 1978!**

ACHHD provides case management for lead exposed children under the age of 6 and in some instances may include an environmental investigation, including testing the water, paint and soil to find the source and cause of the child’s lead poisoning.



Alameda County

Lead Poisoning  
Prevention Program

Housing Rehabilitation  
Program

Healthy Homes  
Program

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared that there is no safe blood level of lead for children and that “the best way to end childhood lead poisoning is to prevent, control or eliminate lead exposures.”

Children in low in low-income families living in poorly maintained housing are more at risk of the devastating, life-long neurological health problems from lead exposures in the home. Middle and upper income children are not, however, exempt from lead poisoning and are at significant risk of lead poisoning if unsafe renovation/remodeling projects are performed on old homes where they live.

**ACHHD provides assistance for lead hazard repair work in the cities of Alameda, Berkeley, Emeryville, and Oakland as well as the communities of Ashland, Cherryland and San Lorenzo for properties with low-income families with children under 6 living in the home. Residents and property owners of those cities can find out more about these programs by calling 510-567-8280 or visiting [www.achhd.org](http://www.achhd.org).**

Our website can also provide additional information for everyone such as other sources of lead, how to reduce lead hazards, how to hire a lead-safe contractor, as well as other education materials to give parents and residents peace of mind.

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The Alameda County Healthy Homes Department has been a national leader in childhood lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes programs, combining health, environment and residential hazard reduction services under one umbrella. The mission of Healthy Homes is to advance an integrated approach for safe and healthy housing, through collaborative community initiatives, applied research and policy development in order to improve the lives of vulnerable populations.

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