



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Melanie Collett

(208) 415-5108

5 Ways to Avoid Lead Exposure in the Silver Valley

SHOSHONE CO., ID – Panhandle Health District (PHD) is encouraging North Idaho families to prevent lead exposure this summer. Families increase their risk when recreating along the shorelines of the South Fork, the chain of lakes, the lower Coeur d’Alene River and around historic mine and mill sites.

Lead interferes with a variety of body processes and is toxic to many organs and tissues including the heart and kidneys. In children, lead exposure affects neurological development, causing potentially permanent learning and behavior disorders.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggests action be taken if a child’s blood lead levels are higher than 5 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$). In the 1970’s, children living in the Silver Valley had blood lead levels averaging 65 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$. Today, the average blood lead level is 2.9 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ in the Silver Valley and just 1% of children and pregnant women tested last year had levels of 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$ or above.

“The successful decline is linked to the removal of contaminated soil from over 7,000 properties within the Bunker Hill Superfund Site,” PHD’s Institutional Controls Manager, Andy Helkey, explained. “Protecting our community from exposure to lead is our top priority.”

While blood lead levels in the Silver Valley are now comparable to the national average, the CDC declares that there is no safe blood lead level for children. Here are 5 ways you can avoid lead exposure this summer:

1- Remove dirt from clothes, toys, pets and equipment BEFORE leaving the area.

After spending time along the river, dust, shake or wash off what you can to minimize the dirt you bring home. Place wet and dirty clothes in a plastic bag so they can be washed at home.

2- When riding ATV’s, motorcycles and bikes, wear protective gear.

A mask or bandana over your face can protect you from contaminated dust.

3- Play in grassy areas rather than dirt or mud.

Ingestion and inhalation are the most common routes of lead exposure – digging up and playing with contaminated soil can increase risk of lead exposure and absorption.

4- Wash hands correctly.

Keep hands clean, especially after playing outside and before eating. Use soap and warm water, but not creek or river water. Hand sanitizer removes germs, but will not remove lead.

5- Get screened!

PHD's [Kellogg office](#) is offering free blood-lead testing for children and expectant mothers from 9AM-6PM, July 27 - 31 and 10AM-2PM, August 1st.

Lead exposure often occurs with no obvious or immediate symptoms, so it frequently goes unrecognized. Even small amounts of lead exposure during summer recreation can have an effect, especially for young children. For more information about PHD's Lead Health Intervention Program, visit <http://panhandlehealthdistrict.org/environmental-health/icp>.

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