

Baltimore City Health Department
WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR

WK. 23

In his WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR dated June 10, 1966, the Commissioner of Health wrote:

Dear Mayor:

There is transmitted to you herewith the Weekly Morbidity and Mortality Statistical Report of Baltimore for the week ending June 9, 1966.

Four children in Baltimore City, ages 18 months to 2 years, have been poisoned by eating lead paint so far in 1966, according to a report of the Bureau of Industrial Hygiene in the City Health Department. A fifth potential case, reported on June 1, is still under investigation by Mrs. Mary Lanahan, the public health nurse assigned to the bureau. The report also shows that 19 additional children, who were investigated as lead poisoning suspects, had potentially dangerous amounts of lead in their blood and are either under treatment or having follow-up tests at hospital clinics. The cases have occurred in different sections of the city and indicate that the lead paint danger is no longer localized to the inner city.

Since most cases of lead paint poisoning occur during hot weather, it is important that all parents of children under five years old be warned of this danger in the months ahead. Preschool children, particularly those of teething age, should be closely supervised to prevent their nibbling at peeling paint either inside or outside the home. Any child seen nibbling paint should be taken to a physician or clinic and checked for lead paint poisoning. The earlier the diagnosis and treatment, the less damage will be caused to the child's brain and nervous system by lead poisoning. As a preventive measure, the City Health Department further recommends that parents examine their homes for peeling paint and remove this hazard by scraping, sanding and repainting with lead free paint so the child is unable to pick at the surface.

City Health Department records show that 1,068 children have been made ill and 134 children have died from eating paint since the hazard was first recognized in 1931. Last year was the first year since records have been kept that no child died of lead paint poisoning in Baltimore City. The 32 cases reported in 1965 was the lowest in 12 years.

Lead paint poisoning is still a serious health hazard in Baltimore and parents should be alert to its dangers. If preventive measures are taken, no Baltimore child should die or get sick from lead paint poisoning.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) Robert E. Farber, M.D.

Commissioner of Health

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