

May 10, 1968

Baltimore City Health Department
WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR

Wk. 19

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In his WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR dated May 10, 1968, the Commissioner of Health wrote:

Dear Mayor:

Child Lead Paint Poisoning

Five Baltimore children have been stricken by lead paint poisoning according to Mrs. Mary Lananan, public health nurse in charge of lead paint poisoning investigations in the Baltimore City Health Department. The first case was reported February 29 and the most recent was on April 18. The children, ranging in age from 2 to 3 1/2 years were made ill by chewing painted surfaces or nibbling paint flakes. One child is believed to have nibbled peeling paint on the outside of the home. Fortunately, most cases were diagnosed early and no child had reached the convulsive and final stages of poisoning which can result in death.

Baltimore's lead paint poisoning cases usually increase with warmer weather and parents are being alerted to the danger by public health nurses, sanitarians, and through the newspapers, radio and TV.

Lead paint poisoning is a preventable disease. Unless found early and treated it can cause paralysis, brain damage and death. The City Health Department advises parents as follows:

1. Prevent your child from chewing painted surfaces or eating flaking paint inside or outside the house.
2. If you see your child chewing paint or if he suffers from abdominal pains, nausea and vomiting, persistent constipation, irritability, frequent headaches or convulsions, consult your family physician or take your child to a clinic without delay.
3. Use lead free paint when painting or repainting indoor surfaces, window sills and furniture. Examine the label on the paint you buy and be sure it is free of lead. City Ordinance No. 150- approved on June 9, 1958 requires warning statements on paints containing more than one per cent lead. If the label does not state the contents of the paint it may be dangerous to use and should not be purchased for interior painting. Paints which state pigment to be "chrome yellow," "chrome green" or "chrome orange" may also be dangerous to use since these are compounds of lead.
4. Remove old paint from window sills before repainting with lead-free paint. It is not legal to use lead paint indoors in Baltimore.

Since 1960 a total of 311 children have been reported as having been made ill of lead poisoning. Of these, 12 cases have resulted in death. However, I am pleased to report that there has been a downward trend in the number of child lead paint victims over the past 10 years from a high of 133 cases in 1958 to 15 cases in 1967.

Very truly yours,

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

Commissioner of Health

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