

JUN 13 1967

Baltimore City Health Department
WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR

Wk. 23

In his WEEKLY LETTER TO THE MAYOR dated June 9, 1967, the Commissioner of Health wrote:

Dear Mayor:

The Baltimore City Health Department is warning all parents that lead paint is still a serious danger to young children, especially during the warm summer months.

Already in 1967 a total of 7 children have been poisoned by eating paint flakes, paint chips, peeling paint, or painted plaster. One child, a two year old, died in January. In the same five-month period 19 children have been reported with elevated blood leads, indicating they had been nibbling paint. These cases were detected through the alertness of physicians or parents and the children were placed under care early in the course of poisoning. These children should make a good recovery.

It is our hope that more parents will be alert to this danger of teething age children which is signalled by a child eating paint flakes or painted plaster. Such observation should compel the parent to take the child to a doctor right away. If this is not done continued nibbling over a period of days or weeks will result in neurological and other symptoms including apathy, pains in the abdomen, nausea, constipation, headaches and convulsions. The end result of continued eating of lead paint is paralysis and death.

The lead paint poisoning problem in Baltimore is no longer restricted to the inner section of the city. Child poisonings now occur wherever there are unsupervised young children and homes painted with lead paint.

This disease of early childhood which has claimed the lives of 136 children since 1931 and caused permanent disabilities in almost 1,000 more, can be overcome only by parental knowledge of the danger, the removal of peeling paint and the supervision of young children until they have outgrown the dangerous lead paint years, about the time they go to school.

Very truly yours,

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

Commissioner of Health

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