



Tom Barrett
Mayor

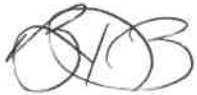
Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health

Health Department Office of the Commissioner

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TO: Alderman Tony Zielinski
14th District

FROM: Bevan K. Baker, FACHE
Commissioner of Health 

DATE: May 8, 2017

RE: Draft Resolution File #168367-1

I thank you for your continued interest in providing the public with information to protect health and well-being. However, the MHD cannot support the proposed resolution. Should the MHD be directed to recommend that clinicians counsel their patients in a way that is in conflict with current evidence-based research, the guidelines of medical professional societies, and an analysis of our local circumstances, the confidence of Milwaukee clinicians in all advice from the MHD may be eroded.

The City of Milwaukee Health Department (MHD) has put childhood lead poisoning prevention as one of our top priorities for more than 20 years. This has resulted in a 90% decline in the prevalence of blood lead levels at 10 micrograms per deciliter (ug/dL) or higher since 1997, and a 66% increase in testing of children during that same time period. Since 2003, we have recorded a 69.3% decline in the prevalence of blood lead levels at a lower level of exposure, 5 ug/dL*.

The MHD takes seriously the responsibility to make independent, evidence-based recommendations to the public and clinicians. In doing so, the MHD reviews existing recommendations from leading public health and medical institutions, peer-reviewed research, and emerging credible research alongside internal expertise and experience. The MHD's standing recommendations regarding childhood lead poisoning prevention take into account the aforementioned research along with an analysis of what risk is present in our community and who is most at risk.

It is of the utmost importance that the public and clinicians remain aware that lead-based paint, ingested as dust or small paint chips from chipping, peeling or cracking paint in the home, after household renovations, as well as the track-in of contaminated soil, is the most common source of lead exposure for young children who live in older housing.

With regard to drinking water safety, the MHD recommends that households where there is a risk for lead in drinking water – those households with lead service lines or internal plumbing – run the cold water tap for 3 minutes if the water has been stagnant for an extended period of time. Flushing water prior to consumption is a cost-effective and accessible means of reducing potential lead exposure from drinking water. Studies by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have shown that flushing can reduce lead levels from hundreds of parts per billion to less than 3 parts per billion. The use of filtration devices certified to remove lead or bottled water is recommended if the household is at risk for lead in drinking water and is home to children under the age of 6, or pregnant or breastfeeding women.

These current recommendations are more stringent and conservative than guidance issued by national medical bodies, as well as other health departments locally and nationwide. Currently there are no regulations or guidance that specifically address the use of filtered or bottled water for vulnerable populations in environments absent of lead service lines or plumbing.

The MHD remains deeply committed to the prevention of childhood lead poisoning. We will continue to review emerging research, the guidance of credible public health and medical institutions, as well as Milwaukee's water quality and treatment, and will notify the public and clinicians if the MHD's recommendations change. Last, I remain available if you have questions.

*The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention lowered the definition of an elevated blood lead levels from 10 ug/dL to 5 ug/dL in 2012, however MHD reports this data back to 2003.

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