



# Health/Education

## Childhood Lead Poisoning, a Preventable Health Problem

Childhood lead poisoning is major and preventable environmental health problem and lead-based paint is now considered the primary source of lead exposure.

To combat the problem, Physicians for Social Responsibility with help from major sponsors, conduct free lead testing for children the second Saturday of each month, from 10 a.m. 2 p.m. at Common Bond, 4616 N. Albina.

Officials say blood lead testing of children should be performed at ages 1 and 2 or at least before age 6 if no previous testing has been done and any risk factors for lead poisoning are present.

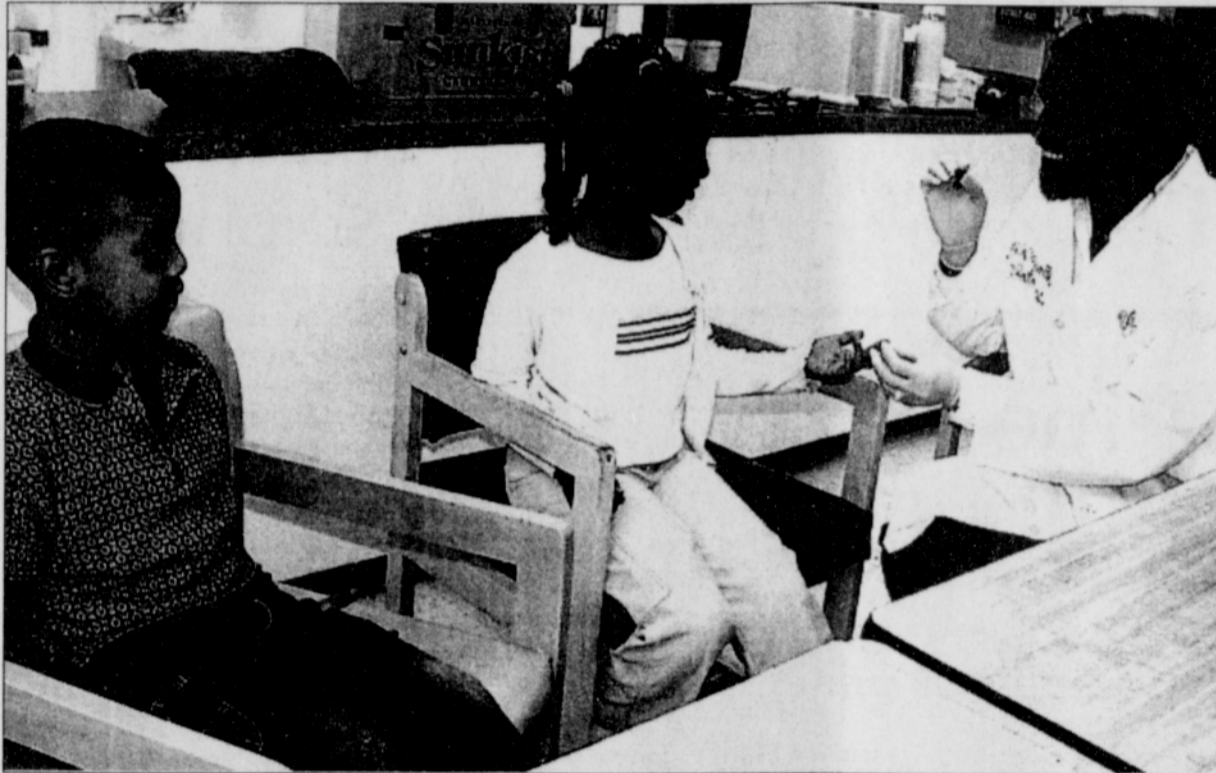
Children who live in or regularly stay in a home, apartment, or child care center constructed before 1978 are at a greater risk of developing lead poisoning, especially if there is remodeling or peeling paint. Other risk factors include family members with exposure to lead and low family income (including those on Medicaid, WIC, or Oregon Health

Plan). The effects of lead poisoning are reversible if detected early by a blood test. If undetected, lead poisoning damages the brain, causing learning and be-

havioral problems in affected children.

The testing is co-sponsored by volunteers from the Oregon chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, Common Bond

and the Coalition of Black Men, with help from Volunteers of America and Old Wives' Tales Restaurant. The Multnomah County Health Dept. provides laboratory testing and supplies.



(PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER) Vijay Balan of Physicians for Social Responsibility administers a test for lead exposure Saturday to Jallanie and Bulcha Sado at Common Bond, 4616 N. Albina. The tests take place the second Saturday of each month.

## Name-Based Reporting of HIV Put on Hold

(AP)-Oregon will wait until Oct. 1 to join 36 other states that require doctors to report the names of people who test positive for HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The policy has been delayed for the second time to give state health officials more time to explain it to the public, officials said Friday.

Under the policy, which is modeled on one begun in Washington state in 1999, the Oregon Health Division would have 90 days to follow up with the patient's doctor to ensure that the patient will receive proper care and support. Then, the patient's name would be converted into a numerical code. The policy would have taken effect on July 1. Anonymous testing would continue as an option at public health clinics.

Health officials say name-based reporting will help them track HIV cases and direct prevention to the most at-risk populations. It will also ensure newly diagnosed patients get proper care and counseling, they say.

But some community groups say

HIV/AIDS carries a stigma, particularly among some ethnic and racial minorities, that would deter people from getting tested if they knew their names would be reported, even confidentially.


Marta Guembes, who does HIV/AIDS testing and counseling for Multnomah County, said she knows many minority patients who would be deterred from getting tested if they knew their names would be reported.

"They're not going to get tested," said Guembes.

Dr. Grant Higginson, OHD acting administrator, said these concerns prompted him to move the policy back.

More than 50 communicable diseases already must be reported, with the patient's name, to health authorities in Oregon. An estimated 6,500 Oregonians are infected with HIV.

Meanwhile, AIDS cases are reported by name in Oregon, as required in every other state. There were 222 new cases of AIDS and 47 AIDS deaths reported in the state in 1999 — less than one-third the totals from 1993.




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## Lead Warning Issued for Mexican Candies

State health officials warned Oregonians to avoid three Mexican candies that contain high levels of lead.

"We want to protect people from these products," said Michael Heumann, an epidemiologist with the Health Division of the Oregon Dept. of Human Services, "especially children under age 6 who suffer the most serious health effects from exposure to lead." The dangerous candies have been found in stores in Oregon, California and Washington. According to Heumann, consumers should avoid a lollipop and two fruit rolls, made in Mexico by Dulmex. Heumann said the lollipop is a soft, dark brown tamarind fruit candy on a white or orange stick. It is wrapped in clear wrapper with an orange-red band that has the word Bolirindo in white lettering and a picture of a brown tamarind fruit. The fruit

roll is cigar-shaped roll with a similar wrapper with the word tamarind in white lettering. A third product Rollito de Coco, a fruit roll made with coconut, has a similar label with the word coconut in white letters. These same Dulmex candies have also been found in Oregon repacked under the brand name Juanitas. Officials of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued a public alert last week after the Dulmex lollipops were found in the California homes of three young children with elevated lead levels. According to results of tests, the children's candy wrappers and lollipop sticks all contained high levels of lead. Preliminary findings from tests of Dulmex products found in Oregon indicate that the ink on the label contains four percent lead. Health officials said there should be no lead in any candy or label.

## Bush Promises Help on AIDS Epidemic

(AP) President Bush said AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria have caused suffering in poor countries that "is almost beyond comprehension."

At a White House ceremony Friday, he announced a U.S. grant of \$200 million dollars to help fight infectious diseases in poor countries. He says there'll be more to come. But critics

said the money is just a drop in the bucket. An Oxfam America official calls the grant "quite inadequate" to fight HIV, which has infected roughly 26 million people in Africa. Nigeria's president and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan attended the ceremony. "As we declare global war on AIDS, we will need a war chest to fight it," Annan said.

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