



Jeb Bush  
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.  
Secretary

---

**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

---

**Tuesday, January 25, 2005**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact:  
Jeannine Mallory, M.P.A.  
Public Information Director  
727-824-6908

**February 14-20 is National Action Week for  
Children's Environmental Health and Justice**

Childhood should be the most carefree and safe time in life. Yet many children in our community are forced to live in hazardous, unsafe and unhealthy homes with environmental hazards such as mold, lead and rodents. Deteriorating older homes, and poorly maintained rental properties in our community pose serious risks for **lead poisoning**, and respiratory illnesses such as asthma. Infants and toddlers who spend 90% of their time inside the home are the most vulnerable population and are at increased risk for exposure to health hazards in the home.

Poor and minority communities bear the highest burden for exposure to environmental hazards, and have the highest rate for illness such as asthma, allergies, and lead poisoning. According to the Alliance for Healthy Homes, substandard housing is the No. 1 environmental health threat to young children. Low income families frequently have fewer choices in housing, and are often forced to live in older, poorly maintained rental properties and substandard housing that is cheaper, unhealthy, and unsafe. Poor and minority families frequently have limited resources to maintain their property. Deferred maintenance in a home built before 1978 that may contain lead based paint, can expose children to lead paint and dust, as well as moisture and water leaks which encourage the growth of mold and mildew, and provide access for cockroaches and rodents.

**(MORE)**



Jeb Bush  
Governor

John O. Agwunobi, M.D., M.B.A., M.P.H.  
Secretary

---

**PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

---

**Children's Environmental Health and Justice – 1st ad**

Children's exposure to lead paint, mold and dust hazards can subsequently cause lead poisoning, asthma, allergies, and respiratory illnesses.

Exposure to lead can result in lead poisoning which can affect a child's health and ability to learn. Lead poisoned children frequently have decreased math and reading scores, learning disabilities, and demonstrate poor performance on standardized tests such as the FCAT (Massey and Ackerman, 2003).

Children living in several areas of our county are at increased risk for developing environmental health illnesses, such as lead poisoning and asthma. Four ZIP codes in St. Petersburg (33701, 33710, 33711 and 33712) and two in Clearwater (33755 and 33756) are areas with the highest risk for environmental related illnesses. These ZIP code communities have the highest number of pre-1978 homes, the largest percentage of Medicaid enrolled children under six years of age, as well as the highest number of low-income, rental, and substandard dwellings.

Do your part today to prevent environmental hazards in your neighborhood by getting involved in environmental health issues in your community. Communities must work together to protect the academic potential and health of all children, our next generation and to make our communities healthier and safer places for children to live.

**For more information on lead poisoning and asthma, contact the Pinellas County Health Department's Lead Intervention and Healthy Homes Team at (727)824-6927.**

###

*The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.*