



## Texas Children's Health Plan

*The best decision a family can make.*



## Houston Department of Health and Human Services

### News release

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### **Texas Children's Health Plan and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services educate local families on the dangers of lead poisoning** *National lead poisoning prevention week is Oct. 23 to 29*

HOUSTON, TX – Oct. 4, 2011 – In preparation for national lead poisoning prevention week, Texas Children's Health Plan and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) are launching a new campaign targeted at lead screening. "Get the Lead Out" is aimed at increasing awareness of the dangers posed by childhood lead poisoning. Through this campaign Texas Children's Health Plan and the HDHHS are working to educate parents about the importance of testing, appropriate ages for lead testing and empowering parents to ask their primary care physician for this test when necessary.

"Early childhood detection of lead poisoning is essential as high levels can cause serious health consequences such as learning disabilities, decreased growth, hyperactivity, impaired hearing, even brain damage. What's more, pregnant women can pass lead through their body to their baby" said Dr. Harold Farber, associate medical director for chronic conditions, Texas Children's Health Plan. "However, the good news is that if caught these effects can be limited by reducing exposure to lead or through medical treatment so it's important that parents are educated and empowered to ask their pediatrician for lead screenings."

"Lead poisoning can be damaging to the growth and development of young children even in small amounts," said Brenda Reyes, bureau chief of HDHHS' Community and Children's Environmental Services. "Despite the continued presence of lead in the environment, lead poisoning is entirely preventable. This collaboration allows the Texas Children's Health Plan and the Houston Department of Health and Human Services to work in partnership with the community to promote and protect the health and social well being of Houston area children."

Unfortunately, Houston has a large number of children with elevated lead levels and many times parents are unaware that a child's exposure can be reduced in a number of ways. Below are some simple things people can do to help protect their family:

- Get your child tested. It is best for your child to be tested at age 1 and 2, but they can be tested up to age 6.
- Get your home tested. Before you buy a home built before 1978, ask for a lead inspection. .
- Get the facts! The Houston Department of Health and Human Services can provide you with helpful information about preventing childhood lead poisoning. Call them at 832-393-5141.

To learn more about the "Get the Lead Out" campaign, visit [www.TexasChildrensHealthPlan.org/leadscreening](http://www.TexasChildrensHealthPlan.org/leadscreening).  
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#### **About Texas Children's Health Plan**

Texas Children's Health Plan was founded in 1996 by Texas Children's Hospital. It is the nation's first health maintenance organization (HMO) created just for children. Texas Children's Health Plan provides STAR/Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to pregnant women, teens, children, and adults in Houston and surrounding areas. Currently, the Health Plan has more than 330,000 members. The staff and network of more than 2,100 providers are committed to providing excellent service and patient care to Texas Children's Health Plan members. Texas Children's Health Plan is also the largest combined STAR/CHIP Managed Care Organization in the Harris County service area. For more information on Texas Children's Health Plan, go to [www.TexasChildrensHealthPlan.org](http://www.TexasChildrensHealthPlan.org) or call 1-800-990-

8247.

**About the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services**

The Houston Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) provides local disease surveillance, preventive health care for the residents of Houston, treatment for selected diseases, a wide range of environmental services and enforcement of certain city and state laws.