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Tracking How the Environment Impacts Children's Health
52 Weeks of Public Health Campaign Spotlight: Children's Environmental Health

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Aug. 31, 2017) – As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) focuses on the many dangers to children's health posed by environmental contaminants.

Because children's bodies are small and still developing, they are more easily exposed to environmental contaminants. Here's why:

- 1) Children breathe more air, drink more water, and eat more food per pound of body weight than adults.
- 2) Children are more likely to put their hands in their mouth.
- 3) A child's body may not be able to break down and get rid of harmful contaminants that enter their body.
- 4) Health problems from an environmental exposure can take years to develop.
- 5) Because they are young, children have more time to develop health conditions and diseases than adults who are exposed later in their life.

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Environmental Public Health Tracking Network is helping us understand more about the relationship between children's health and the environment," says Janie Cambron, manager for EnviroHealthLink, Kentucky's public health environmental tracking program.

Because their bodies are still growing, children are at greater risk if they are exposed to environmental contaminants. A toddler playing in dirt contaminated with high levels of lead can become sick from lead poisoning. A child with asthma playing outside when the air quality is bad may have an asthma attack. Environmental hazards are not just outside, but can also be found inside a child's home or school. Children living in older homes with lead-based paint can get sick from breathing lead dust or swallowing chipping paint. Drinking water from a private well and even a community water system is also a concern if it is contaminated. Bacteria and other harmful chemicals can be a threat to anyone's health, but especially to young children.

For some fun ways to go #BeyondData and get kids involved in environmental health, go to this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/kids/activities.htm>. For more information on the Children's Environmental Health Network, : <http://www.cehn.org/>

Throughout the planned 52 Weeks of Public Health promotion, DPH will spotlight a specific public health issue. Additional information about the campaign is available on the DPH website: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/default.htm> and will be posted on the CHFS Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/kychfs> where Kentuckians are encouraged to like and share posts among their networks of friends.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services, the Department for Public Health, and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.