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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Atlantic City Medical Center,
Mainland Divisions

Cape Regional Medical Center

Cooper Health System

Deborah Heart and Lung Center

Kennedy Health Systems,
Washington Township Campus

Lourdes Medical Center
of Burlington County

Our Lady of Lourdes
Medical Center

Shore Memorial Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-
Elmer Hospital

South Jersey Healthcare-
Regional Medical Center

The Memorial Hospital
of Salem County

Underwood-Memorial Hospital

Virtua Memorial Hospital
Burlington County

Virtua West Jersey Hospital
Voorhees

IT'S TIME TO TEST FOR LEAD Gift Certificates to Encourage Childhood Screenings

The threat of childhood lead poisoning still looms in South Jersey, where several counties have some of the worst childhood lead screening rates in the state.

The best way to keep your children safe from lead poisoning is to get them a blood-lead test. If your kids haven't been tested for lead, now is a great time to do it.

In celebration of National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (October 20–27), Wipe Out Lead New Jersey is offering a \$5 gift certificate to Toys “R” Us and Babies “R” Us for parents who get their children tested for lead.

“The only way to know if your child is at risk of lead poisoning is with a blood-lead test,” says Merle Weitz, Director of Lead Initiatives at the Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC).

“It’s a simple test that can alleviate parents’ worries about whether a child has been exposed,” she says.

New Jersey law requires all children to be screened for lead at ages one and two, and any time thereafter when a risk of lead exposure is identified. Blood-lead tests are quick, and may be ordered by a family physician or any healthcare provider.

Just as important as having children screened is understanding the test results.

“Blood-lead levels can range from zero micrograms per deciliter (ug/dL) to more than 45 ug/dL, with varying degrees of risk,” says Weitz.

“It’s critical that parents not only test their children but that they learn their kids’ blood-lead levels (ug/dL) to determine what to do next,” she says.

Once parents learn their children’s blood-lead levels, there are statewide resources available to help them.

Wipe Out Lead NJ and local health departments offer education to protect families from further exposure to harmful lead hazards. Simple tactics—like frequent hand-washing and a diet rich in calcium and iron—are immediate and inexpensive prevention strategies that can go a long way in reducing the risk of lifelong complications from childhood lead poisoning.

The next step is to test the family home for lead paint dust. Lead paint was often used in homes built before 1978, and every county in New Jersey is home to at least 10,000 such properties. Lead paint dust is the leading cause of lead poisoning in children.

Wipe Out Lead NJ provides free, do-it-yourself testing kits, which detect the presence of lead paint dust in the home, to eligible New Jersey residents.

For more information on home testing kits or the gift certificate program for blood-lead testing, call Wipe Out Lead at 856-665-6000 (or toll-free at 888-722-2903).

“The home kit and blood-lead test are initial steps to identifying lead risks to your family,” says Weitz. “If your child or your home tests positive for lead, it’s important to understand that there are many resources available to help you confront the problem.”

Creating lead-safe homes is a major goal of the Wipe Out Lead New Jersey program. This primary prevention initiative is funded by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs.

“Education is the first step in protecting your family,” says Weitz. “Childhood lead poisoning is one health risk that parents can really do something about, and we’re here to help. So test your kids; test your homes.”

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Wipe Out Lead New Jersey (WOLNJ) and Lead Safe Families (LSF) are lead poisoning prevention initiatives funded by the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs Lead Education and Outreach Program. WOLNJ has been identified as a best practices model for lead poisoning prevention by the Children’s Health Forum. It was also recognized by the National Lead and Environmental Hazard Association as a national model for primary prevention of residence-based childhood lead poisoning.

The Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative (SNJPC) is the state-licensed, non-profit, maternal-child health consortium serving the seven southernmost counties of New Jersey. SNJPC programs and services are dedicated to improving health outcomes for mothers and babies in South Jersey. For more information about the Cooperative or its services, call 856-665-6000 or visit snjpc.org.