



Health, Seniors and Active Living

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Santé, Aînés et Vie active

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January 29, 2020

Dear Parents and/or Guardians of Children at Weston School:

I am writing to you because the recently completed report on the health risks of lead in soil in Winnipeg was released today. You can find it at:

<https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=46801&posted=2020-01-29>

It is important to know that the **health risk from lead in soil remains low**. Lead enters the body if soil is breathed in as dust, or is swallowed when hands are not washed before eating. When soil is covered with grass, concrete, asphalt or other materials, the exposure is significantly less. In winter, when the ground is frozen or covered in snow, there is little to no exposure.

Strides are being made to reduce lead in the environment. Lead smelters no longer run, leaded gas is no longer used in vehicles, burning coal for power ended in 2018, and homes are no longer built and decorated with lead products.

The report made several recommendations to the province and one specific for Weston School (see report recommendation #3) to develop an action plan for the school. The WRHA and MHSAL will meet with Manitoba Education, Manitoba Conservation and Climate, and the Winnipeg School Division to discuss the recommendations related to Weston School. Manitoba Health Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) will also work with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) and Manitoba Education to develop a communications and outreach program that delivers messages about the risks of lead, and how to reduce them for parents and guardians.

Children and adults can avoid exposure to lead in soil by washing their hands after playing or working outside, in particular before snacks and meals. Do not allow toddlers to play in the mud or eat soil. Cover bare soil to prevent blowing dust. See the provincial lead fact sheet for other tips to reduce your family's exposure to lead in our environment: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead.html

If you are gardening, lead levels in soil can be managed by taking some precautions. The province has a gardening and contaminants fact sheet that provides advice on how to assess your garden site for potential contaminants, ways to manage soil contamination and general gardening safety tips. The information is available at: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/home_gardens.html

If you have concerns about your own or your child's exposure to lead, contact Health Links—Info Santé: 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free) or speak with your health care provider.

For more information on lead, please see the provincial lead fact sheet:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/lead.html>

You can also view the gardening and soil contaminants fact sheet at:
https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/environmentalhealth/home_gardens.html

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Richards', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Dr. Lisa Richards
Medical Officer of Health for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority