

# KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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## HEALTH ADVISORY: February 18, 2019

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### Health Care Provider Guidance for potential asbestos exposure at North Park Montessori, Grand Rapids Public Schools

On Friday February 15, 2019, the community was notified that construction had occurred in asbestos containing materials at North Park Montessori beginning in November of 2018 through February of 2019. The school is currently closed and the students have been moved to a different location. Samples of air and dust will be taken of the school to determine what the exposure had been.

#### Children

Schools built before 1980 likely contain asbestos. The studies done on health risks of asbestos exposure have primarily been done on those with long-term industrial occupational exposure. Those risks include lung cancer, mesothelioma, gastrointestinal cancers, pleural effusions, and asbestosis in those with chronic exposure. The risk for low dose, short-term exposure is low, but there is limited data on these types of exposures in children.

There is no lab test for acute asbestos exposure, nor is there any indication for imaging such as a chest x-ray. Short term exposure would not cause any acute symptoms or worsen chronic conditions such as asthma. Dust can exacerbate asthma. Clothing or other items that have been at school such as backpacks should be washed if possible.

#### Adults

Smoking has been shown to increase the risk for lung cancer in those with occupational exposure to asbestos. Teachers, staff, and construction workers who have worked in older buildings or have a smoking history may benefit from a further risk assessment with their primary care physician to determine if imaging is warranted. Noting a potential asbestos exposure on the health history may also be helpful.

#### Lead

Any building built before 1978 has the potential to have lead contamination. If a parent has concerns about lead exposure, we recommend the child have a lead test done through either an initial capillary sample or venous blood draw. KCHD will have further recommendations regarding lead testing once more information is available.

#### References for further information:

- AccessKent.com
- Asbestos and Health: [https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/docs/asbestos\\_factsheet\\_508.pdf](https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/asbestos/docs/asbestos_factsheet_508.pdf)
- Pediatric Environmental Health Service Unit, available for questions: Toll Free: (866) 967-7337
- Lead: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/lead/ProviderQuickReference\\_Sept2015\\_501803\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/lead/ProviderQuickReference_Sept2015_501803_7.pdf)

KCHD greatly appreciates your assistance and will keep you informed of any changes to the situation.

*Nirali Bora, MD*

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