



September 15th, 2005 — Embargoed until 11:00 AM

## **Childproofing for Environmental Health National Awareness Campaign Begins Today**

**Toronto:** The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) is pleased to launch a national Childproofing for Environmental Health campaign aimed at providing parents, child care providers and decision makers with the tools to protect children from environmental risks.

As a part of the Childproofing campaign, CPCHE is releasing *Child Health and the Environment — A Primer* — a full-colour, 130-page introduction to this large and vitally important issue. In tandem, CPCHE has prepared *Playing it Safe: Childproofing for Environmental Health*, a brochure that provides practical and easy childproofing tips to protect our children. These materials are being released in conjunction with Toronto Public Health's *Environmental Threats to Children: Understanding the Risks, Enabling Prevention*.

With a specific focus on chemical and toxic exposures, the materials explain:

- why children are more vulnerable to contaminants than adults
- the major health effects of concern to children in Canada
- the toxic exposures of greatest concern
- what is being done internationally and in Canada
- practical childproofing actions that people can take to protect their children.

The brochure provides multiple tips according to life stages and exposure settings. Some examples include:

**Before Conception:** Women need to avoid fish high in mercury (also pertains to pregnancy, nursing, childhood).

**During Pregnancy:** Pregnant women and young children should not participate in renovation activities. They should choose non-toxic pest control methods when possible. Ask smokers not to smoke indoors.

**Cleaning Tips:** Reduce exposures with frequent handwashing, taking shoes off at the door and using washable entrance mats (cleaned separately from other laundry). Use moisture to remove house dust, often, and vacuum with a powerhead weekly on rugs and floors (twice a week in homes with a crawling child). Choose non-toxic cleaning products.

**While Feeding:** Breastfeed your baby. Breast is Best! Choose low-fat meats and dairy, and low-mercury fish. Eat a healthy diet — lots of whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables. Avoid heating or microwaving food or drinks in plastic containers or foods covered/packaged with plastic film.

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**While Playing:** Try to keep children out of the sun between 11am and 4pm. Follow public health advice during periods of high heat and smog alerts. I.e., reduce strenuous activity outdoors, especially during afternoon rush hours. Drink lots of water and rest frequently.

**While Renovating:** Pregnant women should not do renovations. Be informed about lead and asbestos risks. Avoid sanding old (pre-1976) painted surfaces. Carefully control renovation dust and ensure good ventilation for solvents and glues. Choose less toxic products, like low-VOC paints, finishes and adhesives. Try to avoid products with hazard symbols but if used, closely follow label instructions.

The Primer and Childproofing brochure provide practitioners, the media, policy makers, child care workers, pregnant women and parents with valuable information on environmental risks and how to focus on prevention.

Both resources, as well as more information about children's environmental health is available at the CPCHE website: [www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca](http://www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca).

The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE) is a group of eleven national, provincial and community-based organizations that have been working together since 2001 to protect children's health from environmental exposures and toxic chemicals. We do this by raising awareness of children's environmental health issues among decision-makers, service provider organizations, individual practitioners, parents and the public. CPCHE includes some of Canada's leading voices on children's environmental health issues. Learn more at: [www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca](http://www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca).

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## CPCHE PARTNERS



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