The MN Department of Health (MDH) has recently completed a study on environmental exposure to lead, cadmium and mercury. MDH collaborated with HealthPartners Institute and SoLaHmo Partnership for Health & Wellness at Minnesota Community Care (formerly known as West Side Community Health Services). MDH sent out a News Release about the study yesterday, and shared information via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Because the information from the study might reach lots of families, we wanted to be sure you were aware of it.

A copy of the community report -- MN Family Environmental Exposure Tracking (MN FEET) -- is included in this Wednesday Update. The main “take-aways” from the report are:

- Women in the study who used skin lightening products had more mercury in their urine. Follow-up found that these products were the main reason and that the products were also putting mercury into the air the whole family was breathing.

- Women in the study who ate fish with higher mercury – Walleye, Northern Pike, Bass, White Bass or King Fish – had more mercury in their babies’ cord blood. Follow-up found that most of them ate these fish more than once/month. MDH fish guidelines advise pregnant women and children to eat these fish ≤ once/month. Helping women to eat low-mercury fish following the MDH guidelines is important.

- Asian women in the study, and especially Hmong women, had the highest levels of mercury. Some Hmong women in Minnesota may have high mercury exposures from using skin lightening products with mercury and from eating fish higher in mercury. Using skin lightening products may also be putting Latina and East African women in danger of high mercury levels.

Links to the Community Report and exposure reduction information (in English, Spanish and Somali) are available on the MDH website.