

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Every year, and sometimes as early as September, the Health Office is called on to assist families dealing with head lice and this year is no exception as we have seen our first couple of cases this week. So now that the season is changing and the weather is cooling off significantly, we thought this would be a good time to send out some proactive suggestions and reminders about head lice management.

Please remember, head lice do not carry illnesses or disease. The CDC considers them to be a 'nuisance' but not a communicable disease risk in a public health setting such as a school. However, our district is committed to monitoring and managing the issue in order to do 2 things: to assist students and families who are dealing with head lice, and to contain the spread of cases in the school setting.

### **FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT LICE:**

1. Lice are small grayish-to-brown, wingless bugs about the size of an ant or sesame seed. Head lice are found on, and feed off the head.
2. Lice can live approx 2 days off the body. They cannot hop, they cannot fly.
3. Lice lay tiny oval, tan nits (eggs). Nits are not to be confused with dandruff, which is flaky, or with droplets of hair product, which can form very small white casts around each hair. Dandruff and the residual of hair products are easily removed from hair. However, head lice attach the eggs to hair strands with a very sticky substance, and they are difficult to remove from the hair strand.
4. Lice and nits cannot be removed with regular shampoo and hair washing, and will not come out with routine combing or brushing. Lice must be treated with medicated shampoo, and all nits (eggs) **MUST** be removed by hand. There are no products that kill the nits.
5. Lice are transmitted from one person to another through close direct contact such as sharing combs, brushes, coats, caps, hats, scarves and upholstered seats. If a child brings them home, other family members may get them. The first sign of lice may be intense itching. The lice or eggs (nits) may or may not be seen initially.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU DISCOVER LICE OR THEIR EGGS:**

- Please contact your doctor for the suggested medicated treatment. Please follow the instructions thoroughly. (Some treatments are to be applied to *dry* hair, and some need to be applied to *wet* hair). The treatment must be repeated after one week. Please read and follow ALL label directions.
- Please contact the school nurse if you think your child has lice, so that the problem can be monitored in the school. We are ready to help you with teaching, assistance with head checks, educational materials, and loaner equipment.
- The nits (eggs) **MUST** be removed by hand, otherwise, they will remain on the hair, and will hatch, causing a continuation of the problem, and causing you to begin all measures over again. If you have an active case of lice, you must check your child's head every day, for three to four weeks.
- Use a strong light, directed on your child's head while checking and removing nits. Again, hand removal is the **MOST** effective method of removing nits. The medicated shampoos do not kill nits.

- Once head lice enter a home, they can move from one person to another, through close direct contact and use of shared items. Therefore, as soon as one family member is known to have lice, it becomes essential to do each of the following;
  1. Inspect all members of the family daily for 3-4 weeks, and proceed with treatment when other family members are found to have them.
  2. Wash and change linens daily, and wash and change the child's clothing daily. Wash in HOT water, and then place items in the dryer on HOT setting for one hour. Follow this measure for anything that comes in contact with your child's head. Completely change undergarments, clothing, nightwear and bedding every day.
  3. For any stuffed animal or clothing which may be ruined by a hot wash and dryer for an hour, you may place these items in a plastic bag, and seal it for 3 weeks.
  4. Sterilize combs and brushes in boiling water.
  5. Vacuum furniture-front and back. Vacuum mattress seams, and the area around the child's bed. Vacuum the car seats and upholstery. Vacuum the family area where your child sits.

### **PRECAUTIONS WE ARE TAKING AT SCHOOL:**

1. Head checks will be conducted as needed by the school nurse. Any child found to have lice and/or nits will be sent home so treatment can begin immediately. Parents/Guardians will be directed to and instructed in the treatment regime as established by medical professionals.
2. For re-admittance to school, parents must personally bring the child in to the Health Office for check-in on the day after treatment, and for a regular monitoring after that.
3. If 10% of students in any given class are affected, a letter will be sent home with each student in that class. If any 3 class rooms in a building have a 10% or greater incidence of head lice during a week, a letter will be sent home with each student in that building notifying them of the occurrence and any other pertinent information.

As we move into the winter months, here are a few proactive recommendations:

- Check through your child's hair on a weekly basis. If you have young child in day care or an after care please check their hair weekly, as well.
- Please encourage your child to avoid sharing any personal items such as combs, brushes, hats, coats, scarves, barrettes, hair ties, and bandanas, etc.
- When planning a sleep over, please consider sending your child with his or her own sleeping bag and pillow.
- Instruct your child to zip his or her coat or sweater into their backpack when not being worn.

Your assistance and understanding are much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, or would like resources or instruction in screening for head lice, please call your building nurse. Thank you!

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