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LICE – 10 STEPS TO STAY AHEAD

General Information HANDOUT from the School Nurse

HEAD LICE (or pediculosis) are annoying little insects that live on the human scalp and feed on blood. They are a small, tan-colored critter (less than 1/8 long). They deposit tiny, gray/white eggs, known as “nits”, on the shaft of hair 2 – 4mm from the scalp because the eggs need the warmth from the scalp for hatching. They cannot live for more than 48 hours away from the scalp as adult insects, and eggs cannot hatch at temperatures lower than those found close to the scalp. ***Lice do not carry disease but are a nuisance.*** They are *not a* sign of uncleanness; they *love* clean hair because it is easier to hold on to! Lice are transmitted by **direct** contact, head to head. They crawl, they do not fly or hop. **Once discovered, a child must stay home only until they have been treated.**

STAYING AHEAD OF HEAD LICE:

1. Watch for signs/symptoms of head lice: excessive itching or scratching head especially behind ears and nape of neck.
2. Check family members for lice and nits/eggs at least once a week. It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass.
3. Treat only family members who have lice. Over the counter medications (pediculocides) that kill lice and nits are recommended. Most of these chemicals require 2 treatments 7-10 days apart. Consult with your physician for advice.
4. **Use these specialized shampoos exactly as instructed to be most effective.** Use product over sink. Keep eyes covered with washcloth. Alternatively, a conditioner comb out regime with periodic olive oil application can be used. Your school nurse can assist you.
5. Removing all nits (eggs) with a special fine-toothed metal comb is the most effective way to get rid of them. This may be a tedious job.
6. Wash infested articles that can be laundered at 130 F (54.4 C) and dried on the hot setting. (hats, pillows, bedding, clothing, etc)
7. Toys, personal articles, bedding, other fabrics, and upholstered furniture that cannot be laundered with hot water and a dryer or dry-cleaned can be kept away from people (in a plastic bag) for more than 2 days if there is concern of infestation.
8. Head lice can live for 1 -2 days away from the scalp depending on the temperature; chemical treatment of the environment is not necessary. Vacuum floors, carpets, mattresses, and furniture.
9. **Continue to check head daily for at least 2-3 weeks after discovery. Removing nits EVERY day for 3 weeks is the most effective treatment.**
10. Help prevent lice infestation by encouraging your child not to engage in activity that causes head to head contact. We know that even the best families can catch lice, and most of us who are parents have been through it at least once ourselves.

Contact your School Nurse if you have questions:

SCHOOL

SCHOOL NURSE

PHONE

DATE