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Information for Parents Regarding Lice

Head lice are a widely misunderstood “nuisance-type” health problem, not a health problem, nor do lice spread disease. As per the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations we no longer “mass screen” students, but rather opt to check heads on an as needed basis, it is suggested that parents frequently check for lice and make it a part of your weekly hygiene routine

What are head lice?

- Head lice are tiny (like sesame seeds), wingless, blood-feeding adult insects that feed on the human scalp and can’t survive for more than a day without blood.
- They do not infest animals.
- They do not fly or jump, but crawl at a high speed.
- They are not an indication of poor hygiene or parental neglect.
- Diagnosis is more often made on finding nits (eggs) attached to individual hairs.
- Nits (the egg stage) may be found in the hair, but are most often at the nape of the neck, behind the ears.

What signs should you look for?

- Persistent itching of the head and back of the neck.
- Scratch marks on the scalp
- Sometimes, small white specks such as dandruff can be confused with nits, but nits are difficult to remove while dandruff will brush away easily.

Where do lice come from?

- Head lice crawl from one head to another.
- The most common method is by direct head contact between two children.
- Transfer also occurs by sharing combs, brushes, helmets, phone earpieces and jackets.

How do I end head lice infestation?

1. **KILL THE LICE:** Use a lice killing shampoo recommended by your physician or pharmacist. This shampoo can be bought at a pharmacy or drug store. Follow the directions exactly. Retreat in 7-10 days to kill newly hatched lice that survived. Your child may return to school between treatments. Please continue to follow all instructions.
2. **REMOVE All EGGS:** This is the most important step. Up to 30% of the eggs may survive so they need be combed out. The hair must be combed with the comb (provided in the shampoo box) for at least 10 days. This can be a tedious job. Removing nits/lice works best when hair is wet when combing.
3. **CLEAN HOUSE:** Wash all clothing, towels and bed linens in hot (130 F) soapy water or dry-clean. Toys, stuffed animals, headsets, and unwashables should be tightly stored in plastic bags for 2 weeks. Vacuum furniture, mattresses, pillows, rugs, floors and your car.
4. **SEPARATE HOUSEHOLDS:** If your child divides his/her time between two homes, please discuss these procedures with the other parent to decrease the potential for lice transfer between homes.
5. **CLOTHING:** Please instruct your child to place his/her hat inside the coat sleeve.

REMEMBER to check all family members and treat them. It is important for all families to do a lice check at least once a week. *** Advise your physician if you are pregnant before using any lice killing shampoo (pediculicide).

Please contact the school nurse with any questions or concerns, 908-475-4773 ext. 224