SCOTT COUNTY SCHOOLS HEALTH SERVICES

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have discovered that your student has head lice; a problem that is easily treated.

Head lice affect more people than all other childhood communicable diseases, not including the common cold. But, like a cold, when children come in close contact with each other it is easy to pass head lice along. Shared hats, clothing, brushes, pillows, and other personal articles are perfect vehicles to transfer lice from one person to another. It is important to act immediately to prevent their spread to other classmates and to your family as well.

Diagnosis of head lice is best made by finding a live nymph (immature louse) or adult louse on the scalp or hair of a person. Because they are very small, move quickly, and avoid light, they can be difficult to find. If crawling lice are not seen, finding lice eggs (called nits), which are fastened to the hair shaft, are clearly seen. Nits are teardrop in shape and also very small, only about 1/32 of an inch. They are "glued" to the hair (within ¼ inch from the base of the hair shaft), and cannot be washed or brushed out like dandruff. Clusters of nits may be found in any section of hair, but they are more apt to be behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.

Please read the other side of this letter for instructions on how to rid your student and home of head lice.

For more information go to: www.cdc.gov/lice/head/factsheet.html
www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment.html

If you have questions, please call your Physician or local Health Department (863-3971).

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Sincerely,

_____
Delegated Health Personnel

RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Your student must be checked by a delegated health person and a Re-Entry Form completed before returning to class. Whenever possible, Parent/Guardian should accompany student to school.

Your student should return to school as soon as possible after appropriate treatment.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR PARENTS

Don't panic! Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with cleanliness, nor does it reflect you as a parent. The problem is easily eliminated. Simply follow these instructions.

Check all other family members to see if they are infested. Any family member with evidence of head lice must also be treated.

- Use an effective head lice treatment. Your Pharmacist, Physician, or Health Dept. can recommend an effective pediculicide product. When used as directed, it will be very effective in killing head lice. Because lice treatments my not kill all the eggs with one treatment, it may be necessary to repeat the treatment in 7-10 days.
  There are alternative treatments of mayonnaise and oil and vinegar as well.

- Removing all nits (lice eggs) is the best way to prevent re-infestation. Special combs for this task are usually provided with lice treatment products. This takes time and good light! A metal nit comb used on wet hair may be helpful in nit removal. You also may have to work through the hair, pulling along each strand with your fingernail.

- Wash all clothes, bed linens, and towels in hot water and dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items that cannot be safely washed, such as stuffed animals, should be dry cleaned, or stored outside the home or stored in air-tight plastic bags for a minimum of two weeks.

- Clean combs and brushes in hot, soapy water. Water should be at least 130 degrees Fahrenheit, and it is advisable to let combs and brushes soak in the hot water for 10 minutes.

- Vacuum everywhere to make sure your home is free of lice. Vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture, upholstered car seats; anything that might hold lice. Do a thorough job and discard the vacuum bag promptly.

- Other ways to prevent re-infestation are: avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (e.g. slumber parties, sports activities & camp); do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, & hair articles (e.g. brushes, hair ribbons, & barrettes).

Head Lice Checklist

Date:_____

_____ All family members were examined for the presence of lice and nits. They were treated (if age appropriate) with medicated shampoo or other treatment ***if any bugs*** were found. (Medicaid Insurance recipients – medical card will pay for treatment.)

_____ Nits (eggs) have been removed from the hair of all family members.

_____ All clothing and bedding used by any family member who was treated were washed with hot water and dried in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.

_____ All combs and brushes were soaked in hot water (130 degrees x 10 min)

_____ All hair accessories have been cleaned or discarded.

_____ All carpets, furniture, mattresses, and upholstered car seats were thoroughly vacuumed.

_____ All stuffed animals have been bagged and removed for 2 weeks.

_____ Coats, jackets, and hats have been washed or cleaned.

_____ I understand that all infested family members may require a 2nd treatment (if bugs are present) in 7-10 days (do not retreat before this).

_____ I have read the lice handout information.

_____ I understand my child will be rescreened for the presence of lice in 7-10 days after admittance to school.

Signature _____ Date _____

Head Lice 101

What You Should Know About Head Lice

Lice Lessons

Overview

Head lice are a common community problem. An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States, most commonly among children ages 3 to 11 years old.[1] Though a head lice infestation is often spotted in school, it is usually acquired through direct head-to-head contact elsewhere, such as at sleepovers or camp.[2]

Head lice are not dangerous, and they do not transmit disease.[1] Additionally, despite what you might have heard, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits.[3,4] Your family, friends, or community may experience head lice. It's important to know some basics, including how to recognize symptoms and what to do if faced with an infestation.

Fast Facts

- An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year among US children 3 to 11 years of age[1]
- Head lice do not discriminate, often infesting people with good hygiene.[3,4] They spread mainly through head-to-head contact[1]
- If you or your child exhibits signs of an infestation, it is important to talk to your doctor to learn about treatment options

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp. They feed on human blood.[1] When checking for head lice, you may see several forms: the nit, the nymph, and the adult louse.



Nits are tiny, teardrop-shaped lice eggs that are often yellowish or white. Nits are also what you call the shells that are left behind once the eggs hatch. Nits are attached to the hair shaft and often found around the nape of the neck or the ears. Nits can look similar to dandruff, but cannot be easily removed or brushed off.[1]



Nymphs, or baby lice, are small and grow to adult size in 1 to 2 weeks.[1]



Adult lice are the size of a sesame seed and appear tan to grayish-white.[1]

How are head lice spread?

- Head lice move by crawling and cannot jump or fly[1]
- Head lice are mostly spread by direct head-to-head contact—for example, during play at home or school, sleepovers, sports activities, or camp[1]
- It is possible, but not common, to spread head lice by contact with items that have been in contact with a person with head lice, such as clothing (for example, hats, scarves, or coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels)[1]
- Head lice transmission can occur at home, in the community, or—very infrequently—in school[1,2]

What are the signs and symptoms of infestation?

Signs and symptoms of infestation include[1]:

- **Tickling** feeling on the scalp or in the hair
- **Itching** (caused by the bites of the louse)
- **Irritability and difficulty sleeping** (lice are more active in the dark)
- **Sores on the head** (caused by scratching, which can sometimes become infected)

Finding a live nymph or adult louse on the scalp or in the hair is an indication of an active infestation. They are most commonly found behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the head.[1]

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What if my child gets head lice?

If you suspect your child might have head lice, it's important to talk to a school nurse, pediatrician, or family physician to get appropriate care. There are a number of available treatments, including new prescription treatment options that are safe and do not require nit combing. Other things to consider in selecting and starting treatment include:

- Follow treatment instructions. Using extra amounts or multiple applications of the same medication is not recommended, unless directed by a healthcare professional[5]
- A 2016 study showed that 48 states now have lice that are genetically predisposed to resistance to commonly used treatments[6]
- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments[7]
- Head lice do not infest the house. However, family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats, and towels should be washed in very hot water and dried on the high setting[5]
- Personal articles, such as combs, brushes, and hair clips, should be soaked in very hot water for 5 to 10 minutes if they were exposed to someone with an active head lice infestation[5]
- All household members and other close contacts should be checked, and those with evidence of an active infestation should also be treated at the same time[5]

Myths and facts about head lice

Myth: Only dirty people get head lice.
Fact: Personal hygiene and household or school cleanliness are not factors for infestation. In fact, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits.[3,4]

Myth: Head lice carry diseases.
Fact: Head lice do not spread diseases.[1]

Myth: Head lice can be spread by sharing hair brushes, hats, clothes, and other personal items.
Fact: It is uncommon to spread head lice by contact with clothing or other personal items, such as combs, brushes, or hair accessories, that have been in contact with a person with head lice.[1]

Myth: Head lice can jump or fly, and can live anywhere.
Fact: Head lice cannot jump or fly, and only move by crawling. It is unlikely to find head lice living on objects like helmets or hats because they have feet that are specifically designed to grasp on to the hair shaft of humans. Additionally, a louse can only live for about a day off the head.[1]

Myth: You can use home remedies like mayonnaise to get rid of head lice.
Fact: There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.[7] Consult your healthcare provider to discuss appropriate treatment options, including prescription products.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Frequently asked questions (FAQs). http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html. Accessed April 20, 2017. 2. Pontius DJ. Demystifying pediculosis: school nurses taking the lead. *Pediatr Nurs.* 2014;40(5):226-235. 3. Meinking T, Taplin D, Vicaria M. Infestations. In: Schachner LA, Hansen RC, eds. *Pediatric Dermatology.* 4th ed. Mosby Elsevier; 2011:1535-1583. 4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Epidemiology & risk factors. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/epi.html. Accessed April 20, 2017. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Treatment. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html. Accessed April 20, 2017. 6. Gellatly KJ, Krim S, Palenchar DJ, et al. Expansion of the knockdown resistance frequency map for human head lice (phthiraptera: pediculidae) in the United States using quantitative sequencing. *J Med Entomol.* 2016:1-7. 7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Treatment frequently asked questions. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/ head/gen_info/faqs_treat.html. Accessed April 20, 2017.

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NASN National Association of School Nurses