VBCPS HEAD LICE (Pediculosis) Education Handout

HEAD LICE (or pediculosis) are 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 may live for days or weeks depending on temperature and humidity. They deposit tiny, gray/white eggs, known as "nits", on the shaft of hair 3–4mm 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. ***Head lice do not carry disease, and they are not a sign of uncleanliness***. Lice are transmitted by **direct** contact, head to head. They crawl, they do not fly or hop. **Once discovered, a child must stay home from school until they have been treated.**

10 Steps to Stay Ahead OF HEAD LICE:

1. Watch for signs/symptoms of head lice: excessive itching or scratching of the head especially behind ears and nape of neck.
2. Check family members for live lice and nits (eggs) at least once a week. It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass. Nits (eggs) attach with a cement-like substance to the shaft of individual hairs.
3. Treat 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. If crawling lice are still seen after a full course of treatment contact your health care provider.
4. **Use head lice specialized shampoos, following manufacturer's instructions, to be most effective.** Use product over sink. Keep eyes covered with washcloth.
5. Removing all nits (eggs) with a special fine-toothed 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, and other fabrics 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; chemical treatment of the environment is not necessary. To remove head lice 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.

Contact your School Nurse if you have any questions or concerns