



Student Services Department

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School Nurse

Care of Student with Nits

Date _____

Check Site: Heritage Oak Laurel Encinal Oak Knoll Hillview

Student: _____

Teacher: _____ Grade _____

Dear Parent:

Your child was examined for head lice, but only nits were found. Lice “glue” their eggs, or nits, to hair so that the nits do not get brushed off. Do not confuse dirt or dandruff with nits. Nits stick on the hair, dirt and dandruff can be brushed, or flaked, off.

Pediculosis, or head lice, is a condition that each year affects approximately 6 to 12 million children between the ages of 3 and 12; about 1 in every 100 elementary school children. Head lice are parasites that are generally found on the scalp, around the ears, and at the back of the neck. Lice crawl, they do not fly. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, and can be the color of your child’s hair. Eggs, or nits, are smaller and silver in color. Nits take 6 to 9 days to hatch, and then seven or more days for the lice to become adults and lay eggs. Adult lice can lay up to 10 eggs per day, and can live for 3 to 4 weeks on a human head. Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and they do not transmit disease. They may spread from one child to another with head to head contact or by sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes, caps, pillows, blankets, helmets, or headphones.

The following information may be helpful to you for preventing a live lice infestation.

Inspecting a Head and Combing

You should inspect your child’s head periodically for live lice for the next three weeks, and use a metal nit comb to comb out the nits daily until there are no more nits. Head lice are much more likely to be transmitted from family members and playmates than in the school setting. Inspect all family members’ hair thoroughly, especially in areas close to the scalp at the neckline and behind the ears. Complete observation of the entire head is best performed every day (dampen hair for easier combing) until no more nits are found. A useful method for nit combing is to part the hair into small sections. As each section is combed, pin the hair to the scalp as a beautician would do to keep track of what has been combed. Several brands of metal (not plastic) nit combs with long teeth are available at your local drug store.

Treatment if Live Head Lice are Found

If live lice are found, treatment options include over-the-counter products and prescription treatments. You may wish to consult with your child’s physician to determine treatment plan. Follow the label directions carefully, and do not go beyond the recommended duration of application. Research has shown that extending the application duration does not increase effectiveness. Only treat individuals with lice. It is important to apply one treatment per infested person. **Do not divide treatments among infested people. Follow the product instructions.**

No treatment is 100% effective. Alternative treatments (natural and home remedies) are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, and efficacy is not proven. Permethrin or pyrethrins are the active ingredients in most over-the-counter control products; Nix* and RID* are examples of such products.

Control Measures that are Not Recommended:

There is no scientific evidence to support use of products such as vinegar or compounds advertised to dissolve the glue on the nits (to ease their removal) or to kill the nits. Also, there is no scientific data to support claims that mayonnaise, olive oil, or tea tree oil on the hair can “suffocate” the nits and lice.

Environmental Necessity for Head Lice Treatment

There is no need to apply pesticides in the home. Lice die quickly (within two days) without a blood meal. The following actions may decrease the chance of reinfestation:

1. Clothing and bedding may be washed in hot water (130°C) then dried on a hot cycle for at least 20 minutes
2. Items that are not washable may be dry cleaned or put in a sealed plastic bag for two weeks to prevent lice hatched from nits from getting a blood meal
3. Soak combs, brushes, hair bands, and barrettes in rubbing alcohol or Lysol®* for one hour, or boil for five minutes
4. Carpets and furniture should be vacuumed
5. Continue to screen others in direct contact with the person who has head lice.

Treatment “Failures” Usually Result from the Following:

1. Lice re-infestation from a sibling or playmate
2. Incomplete combing out or removal of the nits
3. Not strictly following labeled directions
4. Not realizing it may take 8-12 hours for the lice to die
5. Not following the environmental cleaning suggestions
6. Incorrect identification (i.e., the problem was not lice)

(*Use of a product name is for identification purposes only and does not constitute endorsement.)

Resources for Additional Information Regarding Head Lice

The San Mateo County Health Department

<http://www.co.sanmateo.ca.us/portal/site/health/menuitem.f44138fe5f6ec63d74452b31d17332a0/?vgnnextoid=5045507494bf8210VgnVCM1000001937230aRCRD&cpsexcurrchannel=1>

The California Department of Public Health

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/HealthInfo/discond/Pages/HeadLice.aspx>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html>