**Helpful Head Lice Information**

Parents are encouraged to check for head lice and nits on a regular basis. Although head lice can be unpleasant, there are many effective treatment options available. It is imperative to find and treat lice quickly to avoid spreading them to others. Included below is information to help understand the life cycle of head lice as well as guidelines for effective treatment.

Head Lice infestation:

The majority of head lice infestations are asymptomatic. The main mode of transmission of head lice is head-to-head contact with a person who is already infested. Contact is common during play at school and at home including sports activities, playgrounds, and sleepovers.

Although the most common transmission occurs after head-to-head contact, wearing clothing such as hats, scarves, sweatshirts, sports uniforms, or hair ribbons worn by an infested person can result in transmission. Other ways transmission occurs include using an infested comb/brush/towel, lying on a bed/couch/pillow, carpet or next to stuffed animal that has recently been in contact with an infested person.

Life Cycle of Head Lice:

The life cycle of head lice has three stages: Nits (eggs), nymph and adult.

**Nits** are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are often confused for dandruff or hair spray droplets. Nits often appear as yellow or white tiny ovals on individual hair shafts. Nits are laid by the adult female and are cemented at the base of the hair shaft nearest the scalp. Nits take about 1 week to hatch.

The nit hatches to release a nymph. The nit shell then becomes a more visible dull yellow and remains **attached** to the hair shaft. The nymph looks like an adult head louse, but is about the size of a pinhead. Nymphs mature and become adults about 7 days after hatching.

**Adult lice** are about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs, is tan to gray-ish white. In persons with dark hair, the adult louse will appear darker. To live, adult lice need to feed on blood several times daily. Adult lice can live up to 30 days on a person’s head.

**Signs of head lice infestation:**

Look closely for nits along the hairline at the back of the head and neck and behind the ears. Nits should not be confused with an accumulation of hair spray, gels, or dandruff, which can be easily flicked off the hair. Nits are firmly attached to an individual’s hair and cannot be removed easily.

**Steps for treating a head lice infestation**

Having head lice is not a sign of poor personal hygiene or an unclean living environment. Head lice do not carry bacterial or viral diseases.

1. Treating the infested person requires using an over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication. Lice have become resistant to many OTC medications, so use cautiously and continue to be diligent about rechecking. Apply lice medicine (pediculicide) according to the instructions contained on the box or printed on label. If the infested person has a lot of hair, it may be necessary to use the entire bottle, sometimes 2 are needed. Pay special attention to instructions on the label about how long it should be left on the hair and how it should be washed out. Special fine-toothed combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft. \*\*Removing lice and nits by hand and comb is necessary, even after using the pediculicide. (Nit combs can be purchased anywhere, even on Amazon. Nit Free Terminator is a great, inexpensive option). Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using the fine-toothed nit comb. After each comb through, wipe the comb on a wet paper towel to inspect for lice or nits. Pay attention to instructions. \*Please note: Retreatment of head lice usually is recommended because no approved pediculicide is completely ovicidal (does not kill all the egg stages). To be most effective, retreatment should occur after any new eggs have hatched **about a week after the first treatment (7-9 days),** but before new eggs are produced.
2. Another option is to use oil (olive or coconut oil). Thoroughly apply a generous amount of oil (like olive or coconut oil) to dry hair, working it into the hair and scalp. Section the hair and meticulously comb through each section with a fine-toothed nit comb, wiping the comb on a paper towel after each pass to remove lice and nits. Leave the oil on for at least several hours or overnight to suffocate the lice, then wash it out.

\*Please note: Repeating oil and combing process every 2-3 days for about 2 weeks is necessary to ensure all lice and eggs are eliminated.