

## HEAD LICE INFORMATION SHEET

Below you will find information on the facts, symptoms, and treatment of head lice.

### **FACTS:**

Head lice are small insects that live on the heads of humans. Lice eggs (nits) firmly attach themselves to individual hairs and hatch about 7-10 days later if not removed. Head lice can't live on pets or other animals, and lice from animals can't live on humans. Lice can't fly or jump from one person to another. They are spread by direct head-to-head contact or by sharing hats and clothing, combs, brushes, etc. , that have been used by a person who has lice at the time. Frequent bathing or shampooing with regular soap and shampoo will NOT prevent or get rid of head lice. Anyone can catch this nuisance disease.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:**

Itching of the head may be seen but that is not always the case. Red bite marks on the scalp may be present. Live lice may be clear in color or reddish brown and are about the size of a period in this sentence up to 2 inch long. Nits may be identified as tiny egg-shaped specks attached to the hair shaft that can't be blown or brushed away or removed except by pulling them off individually. Nits can be found anywhere on the head and anywhere on the length of the hair. If one family member or friend has head lice, the entire family should be checked as well as close personal contacts. Examination is best done by parting very small sections of hair and looking carefully. Hands and combs that are used should be thoroughly washed after examination.

### **TREATMENT:**

A special medicated shampoo or hair rinse is needed to kill lice. Regular shampoo will NOT work. Medicated products are available at drug stores or through your health care provider. Use the product according to package directions. The shampoo or rinse does not remove the nits, only live lice; each nit must be removed by hand after treatment. A second treatment in 7 days is recommended to make sure any nits that were missed do not hatch. Anyone who is pregnant or nursing, under the age of 2, or has extensive cuts or scratches on the scalp should contact his/her health care provider before using these products.

### **FOLLOW-UP:**

Removal of the nits from each hair shaft after treatment, examination of the hair daily for at least 7-10 days, and immediate cleaning of the living and sleeping areas in the home are critical to ridding a family member and the house of lice. Removal of the nits may be done with the fingernails or a special fine comb that may be purchased at a drug store. Clothing and bedding that have been used by anyone with lice during the 3 days before treatment should be washed in HOT water and dried in a HOT dryer. Items that can't be washed should be sealed in a plastic bag for 14 days so that lice die before the item is used again by the family. Vacuuming of all upholstered furniture, including mattresses and car interiors,

and wiping down with a wet cloth all smooth surfaces where lice or nits may have fallen throughout the home is very important.

## **SCHOOL POLICY:**

### *1. Lice in an individual child*

- a. Because a child with active head lice infestation has likely had the infestation for a month or more by the time it is discovered, the child poses little risk to others.
- b. If he/she does not have a resulting health problem, he or she should remain in class but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others.
- c. Common sense should prevail when deciding how “contagious” an individual child may be (a child with hundreds versus a child with 2 live lice). It may be prudent to check other children who were most likely to have had direct head-to-head contact with the index child.
- d. If a child is assessed as having head lice, confidentiality must be contained so the child is not embarrassed.
- e. Advise family verbally or with a note sent home with the child that adequate treatment is in the best interest of the child and his or her classmates and that all household contacts need evaluation for head lice and may need treatment.

### *2. Classroom Outbreaks (more than 3 cases in a class or resistant/recurrent cases)*

- a. For classroom outbreaks, collaborate with the school physician (WorkFit Medical).
- b. If there is failure of treatment (live lice within 10 days following adequate treatment) the child must have a note from their primary care physician to return to school.

Students should have very few, if any, nits left in their hair when they return to school after treatment. They will be checked again in one week or more often if necessary to see that no new lice or additional nits are present. This is a double check; **the primary responsibility is with the parent to do this at home.**

Head lice are considered a communicable disease by the health department and should be reported to school as soon as cases are discovered. In this way the staff at school may be able to prevent your child from being re-infected. The school staff is interested in working with parents to help prevent this annoying problem from interfering with school attendance for all students. If you have questions, please call the school office.

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the School Nurse.

Thank you,

Mrs. Smart- Middle/ High School Nurse

315-902-3020

Mrs. Edwards- Elementary School Nurse

315-902-2120

