

MILTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

HEAD LICE INFORMATION FROM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NURSE SUSAN WELCH, RN

- Head lice are easier to control when caught early. I strongly encourage parents/guardians to **inspect their child's hair daily as part** of their normal hygienic routine: A few seconds daily can save many hours later. Prudent practice of frequent screening is based on the fact that most cases of head lice are contracted at home.
- Never assume you will know if or when your child is exposed to head lice. Exposure to an infested person is common, and can occur in any public or private gathering (playground, church, school, doctor's office, movie theatre, your own home, etc.).
- Although head lice may be discovered at school, it is ultimately the parent's responsibility to treat and manage their child's hair.
- **What to look for:**
- Good lighting is important for accurate inspection
- A nit comb can assist in identification and removal of hard to find lice/nits
- Begin inspecting by separating the hair to make the scalp visible. The fast crawling lice are hard to find as they move quickly away from light.
- Look for nits (eggs) close to the scalp, especially behind the ears, nape of the neck, and crown of the head.
- You may also find sores or scabs where the child has scratched.
- Be thorough! The live ones are fast and hard to find.
- **If you find them.....**
- Relax!.....don't panic
- Don't be embarrassed.....lice can happen to anyone.
- Notify school nurse or office, babysitter, close contacts, etc
- Realize that when discovered, lice have probably been present in the hair for at least 2-4 weeks.
- Follow your Health Professional's directions - DO NOT OVER TREAT!
- Call me if you have questions, aren't sure of what you are looking at, to report names of close contacts of your child or if you just need reassurance.
- **If you don't see anything....**
- Relax for now, but don't let your guard down
- Remember: you can be exposed to head lice anywhere, anytime.
- Make head checks a routine part of your day/week.

Interesting Facts....

- Infestations have been documented since the beginning of recorded time.
- Desiccated head lice and eggs have been found on scalps of Egyptian mummies, and Incan Princess.
- In Ancient Mexico, the Aztecs offered lice to Montezuma, and Montezuma paid people to pick nits off subjects. He dried the nits, and saved them in his treasury.
- Women of Northern Siberia threw lice at their men as a sign of affection.
- In the Tonga, kids eat their parent's head lice as a sign of respect.

Interesting Treatments....

- In the 16th Century BCE, Egyptian nobles used date flour on the scalp to treat lice.
- In 23-79 CE, Pliny, a Greek naturalist, prescribed the application of viper broth to the scalp and body
- In the 1700's wigs were popular with men and women as a way to hide their lice infested heads, or their baldness after shaving their head to get rid of it.
- In 1681 Nick Culpepper The English Physician Enlarged recommended tobacco juice to kill lice on children's heads.
- At the beginning of the 20th Century, herbal remedies were popular including tobacco leaves, larkspur, and chrysanthemums.
- During WW II, synthetic DDT was introduced as a treatment.
- Vodka applied to the hair is a common treatment in some poor Russian countries.

And the search continues for the perfect cure.....

School Guidelines for Management of Pediculosis at Milton Elementary

Milton Elementary School recognizes the **parent's role and responsibility in** prevention, detection, and management of pediculosis. Routine screening of children's heads by their parents is strongly encouraged for early identification of pediculosis infestation or other scalp/skin conditions.

A mass screening for identification of head lice will be done once at the start of the school year. Thereafter, school personnel may request a head check on any student suspected of having head lice (scratching their head, visible nits in hair, live bug noted, etc). If a classroom has more than two students identified with active infestations, the students of that class may be screened.

Parents of identified students with nits (eggs) may be notified by phone, or by letter at the end of the school day. If live lice are found, the student will be dismissed home.

Effective treatment can be accomplished overnight, allowing readmission the following day. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to treat the student at home. The student **must** report to the nurse's office in the morning.

Students may be readmitted to school when **NO** active infestation is present. If a student continues with active infestation (the presence of live lice or no progress in nit removal), the student will be dismissed home for further treatment.

If a parent/guardian is not compliant with treatment options, resulting in the student missing more than two days of school, the following measures may be implemented:

- 1) Review of attendance and truancy guidelines.
- 2) Conference at school with the nurse, principal and/or counselor with a plan developed for treatment and return to school.
- 3) Referral to outside agency for assistance.

Helpful Resources:

- American Academy of Pediatrics Article "Head Lice," <http://www.aapnews.org>
- Centers of Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/headlice
- Harvard School of Public Health, <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html> (This is an excellent site that answers many questions).