



ANDERSON COUNTY

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Parents/Guardians,

During the cold weather months head lice tends to increase in the school setting due to students wearing coats, hats and other winter apparel. Because of this increase, we encourage parents to routinely check their student's hair and report any findings of lice to the school nurse. Below you will find some very helpful information and guidance about how to prevent and treat lice. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact your child's school nurse.

People sometimes think that a head louse is a sign of uncleanliness, but in fact no matter how clean you are anyone can get them. They are easily passed by being in close contact with someone or by sharing combs, brushes, hats, clothes, helmets, and headsets. Head lice are small parasitic insects that live on the scalp and neck hairs of human hosts. Lice ***CANNOT*** fly, hop, or jump. It can be irritating and disturbing to feel head lice on your scalp, but they are not known to carry any human disease.

Young children have higher rates of head lice infestation than older children and adults. Children between the ages of three and 12 are the most likely to get them. In this age group, boys and girls tend to be at equal risk. Among teenagers, girls are more often affected than boys.

Desperate parents have tried many household remedies, some of them dangerous and all of them unproven. Children have occasionally been seriously harmed from these home remedies, which have included commercial pesticides, kerosene, and gasoline. Our recommendation is **DO NOT use any of these remedies.**

Lice are usually found nestled in the hair close to the scalp at the top of the head, behind the ears or at the back of the neck. The classic telltale sign is scratching. Lice require blood from the "host," or human being they are living on, in order to survive. Without a host, they cannot live more than one or two days. The female louse can lay 3 to 6 eggs per day-about 50 to 150 in her lifetime. The eggs, called nits, are very small, oval-shaped, and grayish-white and difficult to remove from the hair. The female attaches the nits to hair with a gummy substance. It takes approximately seven to ten days for a nit to hatch.

"To protect and promote a healthy community."

When checking your child for lice you should use good lighting such as the natural sunlight and a lamp with the shade removed. Start at the back of the neck and proceed to each side, lifting the hair in small sections all over the head. If head lice is found, your hair can be washed with a louse-killing shampoo. There are several kinds you can buy. The instructions on the package should be carefully followed. If you have Medicaid or health insurance, you can phone your doctor and ask that a prescription be phoned in. With either of the insurances it will be treated as a medication prescription and you will be expected to pay as usual.

All nits must be removed from your hair. Otherwise, they may hatch and you have more lice. Most lice shampoo's come with a comb to help with removing the nits. It may be easier for someone to use his or her fingers to pull out the nits. Combing out nits can take awhile, so be patient!!! It's very important to get every single one.

If lice are found it is important to thoroughly clean everything. Personal items such as combs, brushes, and hair accessories must be soaked in very hot water for twenty minutes or better yet just throw them away. Clothing, linens, and towels should be washed with hot soapy water and completely dried in a clothes dryer using the hot cycle. Non-washable items such as stuffed animals, pillows etc., can also be placed in the dryer on hot cycle for 20 minutes. If there are items that cannot be washed or placed in the dryer such as headphones etc., they should be placed in an airtight plastic bag for two weeks.

Because lice can live up to 48 hours without a host, sofas, chairs, mattresses, carpets, and car upholstery should be thoroughly vacuumed. Throw the vacuum bag away. If you decide to use the lice sprays, please make sure the room is well ventilated due to the insecticides in the ingredients. The latest recommendation published on lice sprays is that it is not necessary to use them. Be careful!!

Head lice are the cause of much embarrassment and misunderstanding, and many unnecessary days lost from school and work. Please help your school in controlling head lice by routinely checking each of your children at home on a weekly basis. If you are not sure what you're looking for please contact School Health.

Sincerely,

School Health Nurse