

October, 2014

Dear Andersen Families:

I am writing this letter to inform you that we have recently had a few cases of head lice here at Andersen Elementary. Head lice are a common occurrence among school-age children. It is spread through direct head-to-head contact or may be indirectly spread through shared items such as combs, brushes, head phones, towels, hats, coats and sleeping mats or cots. Upholstered furniture, car upholstery, rugs, carpets and items like stuffed animals can harbor head lice. Head lice can survive off of the body for 1-2 days, allowing for re-infestation. Household pets are not a source of head lice. The incubation period is from 6 to 14 days. It is important that we teach children the risk of head lice.

Symptoms:

Head lice are insects about 1/8 to 1/10 of an inch long; they are gray to rust in color. They lay eggs known as NITS on the shaft of the hair. They are small oval and silvery white. NITS stick to the hair and will not flake out as dandruff does. The female head louse lays the eggs on the hair close to the scalp hatching within two weeks to mature lice. If you suspect head lice, check your child's hair closely. Head lice may be difficult to locate because they move to avoid light. NITS may be easier to locate. If left untreated, head lice will quickly increase in number, so it is extremely important to treat head lice as soon as detected. Severe itching may lead to sores that can get secondarily infected by bacteria. Lice DO NOT jump or hop, but are transmitted by contact with hats, combs, brushes, coat hoods, pillows, backs of upholstered chairs, car seats, and personal contact.

Regulations require that a student with lice must be kept out of school until treated and ALL NITS HAVE BEEN REMOVED. Re-entry is not allowed until all of the nits (eggs) have been removed. **Children re-entering school must be checked by the Health Assistant before returning to the classroom.**

HOW TO GET RID OF HEAD LICE:

1. Treat individuals with head lice medication. The contagious period is as long as there are live lice present on the head or in the environment. (Medication can be purchased at a drug store with or without a doctor's prescription.)
 - a. Follow package directions when applying medication.
 - b. Wash combs and brushes, hair curlers, etc. with medication shampoo.
 - c. Remove **all** NITS (eggs) by hand with a fine-toothed comb.
 - d. Do not use the medication shampoo more often than the directions indicate.
2. Check everyone who lives with you for head lice. (Treat anyone who has head lice per package directions- household pets do not carry head lice.)
3. Wash hats, pillowcases, sheets and blankets, clothes, backpacks and towels in hot water (for at least 10 minutes) and use a hot dryer when possible. Dry clean clothing when necessary. Vacuum furniture, carpeting, mattresses and car upholstery. You can use a hot iron on mattress cover and furniture if heat will not damage the surface. Items that cannot be washed should be put into a plastic bag and sealed for 4 weeks.
4. Spraying furniture or carpeting with insecticide sprays is not necessary; however sprays for lice are available from drug stores if you want to use one. Follow package directions.
5. Recheck treated head:
 - a. First day after treatment
 - b. Second day after treatment
 - c. Seven to ten days after treatment
 - d. Second week after treatment
6. Recheck household members weekly until head lice problem is corrected for everyone.
7. Notify schools, daycare center, and child's playmates of head lice problem whether it was discovered at home, school or doctor. Confidentiality is a priority here at Andersen.
8. We suggest you check your child's hair for lice on a weekly basis during the school year.

Please keep this information on hand throughout the school year. If you have questions please call the school health office at 480-812-6002.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shannon Hannon, Principal