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### Notes from the Nurse

School has started, schedules and routines are more regular and children are close together. This is a time to review preventive health practices. Washing hands is a great way to deter many health concerns including spread of bacteria or sharing allergens. A review of some preventative practices can also deter head lice. I am guessing some people will feel an urge to scratch and some will stop reading any further. If you are proactive with this issue, you may save yourself some time and work later. With lice, numbers matter. The sooner detected, the sooner treated. The less nits and adult lice, the less eggs are present. Lice are usually transmitted by head to head contact. Transmission occurs through friends and family members children have close contact with.

What can you do to be proactive? We don't wait until we hear someone cough before we wash our hands. To start, try to keep your emotions about this issue in check. Our children watch us and will pick up on your reaction.

Practices in the home should include each family member having their own personal items. Combs and hairbrushes should not be in the same drawer. Instruction for children to not share personal items like hats, coats, Halloween costumes and masks, pillows, towels, hair items or similar items where head to head contact or shared use is practiced. Long hair can be kept back, up or in pony-tails. Routines can help deter opportunities for lice to be shared.

If found, contact your child's physician. Your child's doctor will know the health history and age of your child and what the best treatment for your child would be. There are many more options available for prescription. The longer your child's hair is, the more "bottles" will be needed for effective treatment. Different insurers and copays will also be taken into account.

Please remember: Lice do not carry disease.

They can be annoying and prompt extra cleaning. They can be embarrassing. It is better to address this in the privacy of your home. Children are more comfortable with parents checking them. When an established routine of checking your child before lice are present, the emotion of the situation is more tolerable if lice are actually found.

It can be difficult, if lice are found, to let your child's close contacts know. It is an important step in the process that should not be skipped. Remember, it is a numbers thing! The sooner recognized and treated, the less lice and contacts. These are your child's friends and your support system.

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