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Take Action Against Head Lice
TMHD Offers Advice

During the past two months, there have been some confirmed cases of head lice throughout the elementary and middle schools. This is not uncommon at this time of the year. Head lice are not something that you should be ashamed of. It is a common problem, second only to the common cold among communicable diseases affecting school children. In an effort to prevent head lice from reoccurring, the Trumbull Monroe Health District (TMHD) strongly recommends that parent conduct frequent hair checks on their children. The school vacation is a great time to break the cycle. TMHD asks parents to be vigilant before sending children back to school after the holiday break.

Head lice are tiny, wingless, parasitic insects that live and feed on blood from your scalp. They do not fly or jump. They are spread by head to head contact and by sharing personal items with a contaminated individual, such as hats, brushes/combs, or headphones. Lice can live for about two days without a meal and 30 days if it has a human blood supply. A female louse lays 3-5 eggs per day. It takes 7-10 days for the egg to hatch into a nymph and another 7-10 days to be fully mature and able to continue the life cycle and lay its own eggs

The presence of lice is usually confirmed by seeing the insect moving on the head.

Intense itching on your scalp, neck and shoulders can occur causing discomfort. Head lice are a nuisance but not known to be vectors or infective agents of disease. Therefore, they are not considered a public health threat.

TMHD recommends the following should a family member be diagnosed with lice:

- Wash items (bedding, stuffed animals, and clothing) in hot soapy water – 130 degrees Fahrenheit – and dry them at high heat for at least 30 minutes. Soak brushes and combs in hot water for five to 10 minutes.
- Seal bedding, clothing and unwashable items in plastic bags for three to four days. This will kill live lice, and newly hatched lice will die because they have no nutrition.
- Vacuum all floors and furniture daily.

The best approach to head lice prevention is to take thorough steps to get rid of the lice and their eggs as quickly as possible. The sooner the nits/louse eggs and head lice are detected the easier and quicker it is to control them. Head checks need to be done at home several times a week, if not daily. Careful inspections of your child's hair is the best control measure you can take to prevent their spread or re-infestation at your home or in school.

Over the counter shampoos and treatments are very effective in ridding the hair of lice.

Directions must be followed exactly, especially for the timing of any retreatments. Some

lice may be resistant to the treatments. Contact your health care provider if the methods you are using are unsuccessful to eliminate lice and nits.

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The mission of the Trumbull Monroe Health District is to protect the health of residents, and to prevent disease. For more information on the Trumbull Monroe Health District call 203-452-5195, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. or visit our website at www.tmhd.org.