



Student Wellness Newsletter

Elementary

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Dear Parkway Families,

Parkway School District School Health Services is pleased to introduce this first edition of our Elementary Student Wellness Newsletter. With this newsletter, we hope to work together with you to promote health and wellness in our students. We will use this forum to share important information to help you keep your children healthy and learning to their fullest potential. We welcome comments and suggestions about what you would like to see in this newsletter. Please feel free to contact Robin Wallin, Director of Health Services at 314-415-5064 or email rwallin@parkwayschools.net.

Illness Guidelines

If your child will not be attending school for any reason, it is very important for you to call and notify the school office of the reason for the absence. This helps us to keep track of illnesses among our students. It also helps us be assured that your child is safe at home.

With the arrival of colder weather, we have entered the cold and flu season. For the health of your child, other students, and school staff, it is important to know when your child should stay home due to illness. Students should stay home if they have had any of the following symptoms:

- fever of 100 or higher in the past 24 hours
- undiagnosed rash that is accompanied by fever or itching
- bad cough or difficulty breathing
- vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- sore throat, with fever or swollen glands in the neck
- symptoms of being sick such as being unusually tired, fussy, pale or had difficulty waking

If your child has strep throat or another bacterial infection, he/she should stay home until the antibiotic has been given for at least 24 hours and your health care provider has given permission for your child to return to school. We encourage you to seek medical attention when your child is sick and to follow your health care provider's recommendations about returning to school and other social activities.

Now is the Time for Annual Flu Vaccination

We have started to see a few cases of flu in our students this fall. Health officials recommend annual flu vaccines to protect children and adults from the flu virus. It is not too late to protect your family from the flu by getting vaccinated now. Flu vaccines are available at many pharmacies and doctor's offices.

As always, if you have any concerns about your child's health, please contact your school nurse. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our students healthy and safe. Don't forget to call your school when your child is absent!

Care for Sick or Injured Children at School

If your child becomes sick after arriving at school, the school nurse or other school staff member will call the parent or emergency contact person to come pick up your child. Your child will be removed from the classroom and must be picked up as soon as possible. Please consider carefully how you will handle the possibility of your child needing to come home unexpectedly. In an emergency, the school nurse will call EMS to transport the child to the hospital. ***It is very important to keep accurate and current phone numbers on file with your school for home, work and alternate emergency contact persons.*** Please contact your child's school if you need to change or add any contact information.

Head Lice Prevention Strategies

Head lice are a common problem in school-age children. It can take up to two weeks for head lice infestation to become apparent. Winter break can be a time when many children are exposed to head lice visiting friends or relatives. This information may help decrease the risk of your child becoming infested or give you the information you need to treat head lice in your child.

Anyone can get head lice. They are not a sign of being dirty and should not be considered a sign of an unclean house. Although head lice do not jump, they can spread from one person to another. School-age children and their families are likely candidates for head lice because it spreads through close contact. Tell your child that he/she should not share personal items such as hats, combs, brushes, pillows or bike helmets, because these items can transmit lice. Head lice do not cause any diseases to humans.

If you suspect head lice, check your child's head closely. Head lice are small, light to dark brown insects no larger than the size of sesame seeds. The female head louse lays eggs, called nits, on the hair shaft close to the scalp. These nits, which look like tiny whitish ovals, are firmly glued to the hair shaft and usually hatch within two weeks. Nits are most often found in the hair behind the ears and at the back of the head and neck. Nits should not be confused with dandruff. Dandruff can be easily flicked off the hair; nits cannot because they are firmly attached to individual hairs. Head lice may be hard to locate because they move to avoid light. Nits may be easier to find. If left untreated, head lice will quickly increase in number, so you have to be sure to treat it as soon as it is detected.

What can I do?

At home, the best thing to do is to check your entire family for lice and nits regularly, especially after sleep-overs. It's also important to be alert for the signs and symptoms which include intense head scratching. If you find lice or nits in your child's hair, comb out as many of the nits as possible using a fine toothed comb or tweezers and then use a special medicated shampoo that contains either pyrethrin or permethrin. These products can be purchased without a prescription at any pharmacy and at most grocery stores. *The medication should be used exactly as directed in the package instructions.* Do not shampoo your child's hair with regular shampoo or excessively comb for several days after the application of the medicated shampoo. This will allow the medication to work and continue to kill the lice and nits. Use the medicated shampoo again in one week, if needed. None of the treatments are 100% effective and it is very common for it to take a few weeks to completely resolve a head lice infestation. Remember to check all family members and treat those with any signs of head lice. For persistent cases that do not respond to 2 or 3 consecutive weekly treatments of the over-the-counter shampoo, prescription medications are available. Contact your health care provider for more information. There are also for-profit companies that can assist families with treatment of head lice. While these services can be very effective and save parents time, they are expensive alternatives and not essential to eradicating infestations.

It is also important to wash bedding, towels, clothes and coats in hot soapy water. Drying these items in a hot dryer is recommended. Items which cannot be washed can be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks. Carpets, upholstery and car seats should be vacuumed. Head lice do not live off of their hosts for more than a day or two, so excessive cleaning is not needed.

Parkway Protocol

When a child is identified with an active head lice infestation at school, parents are notified of the suspected infestation and provided with information about treatment. Students will be sent home at the end of the day and may return to school after they have received appropriate treatment at home. Students with nits only are not excluded from school.

Please know that we share your concern about head lice. If you detect head lice in your child, please let the school nurse know. Parkway school nurses will alert parents and guardians when there is an unusual clustering of head lice cases, while still seeking to protect the privacy of individual students. By working together, we can successfully eliminate head lice. Please feel free to contact your school nurse if you have any questions.

Resources for more information

Centers for Disease Control

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html>

Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. *Prevention and Control of Communicable Diseases: A Guide for School Administrators, Nurses, Teachers, Child Care Providers, and Parents or Guardians*. Retrieved from <http://health.mo.gov/safety/childcare/pdf/PreventionandControlofCommunicableDiseases.pdf>

References:

Devore, C. D., Schutze, G. E., Okamoto, J., Allison, M., Ancona, R., Attisha, E., & Minier, M. (2015). Head lice. *Pediatrics*, 135(5), e1355-e1365.

Frankowski, B. L., and Weiner, L.B. (2002). American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on School Health; and the Committee on Infectious Disease. Head Lice. *Pediatrics*, 110, 638-643.

Healthy Habits for School Age Children

1. Visit your health care provider regularly to make sure your child has all of the immunizations he/she needs and is growing and developing well.
2. See your dentist at least twice a year for routine cleanings and examinations.
3. Limit the total amount of time your child spends in front of the TV, computer or video games to no more than 30-60 minutes per day.
4. Encourage physical activity by becoming an active family and doing things that get everyone moving together.
5. Eat a healthy diet. Plan dinner together as a family as often as possible avoiding fast food and fried foods. Include fruits and vegetables in each meal.
6. Always eat a healthy breakfast. Check out the school breakfast and lunch programs.
7. Limit sugar beverages like soda and juice and encourage your child to drink water and 2-3 cups of low-fat milk per day.
8. Make sure your child gets enough sleep (9-12 hours per night).
9. Teach children to always wash their hands after using the bathroom, coughing or sneezing and before eating.
10. Call your school nurse if you have any questions about your child's health.