

Health Reminders from the School Nurse

A healthy school environment requires the cooperation and effort of us all working together. It is important to understand that when your child attends daycare, school, or any other activities where other children are present (especially in the younger age groups), he/she may be exposed to certain communicable diseases from time to time. Communicable disease is a term given to a category of illnesses that may be easily transmitted from one person to another such as strep throat, pink eye (conjunctivitis), influenza, and head lice. While these few illnesses seem to be the ones people are often familiar with, there are actually approximately 54 different illnesses listed in the Missouri Department of Health communicable disease manual that you may need to be aware of as your child enters a child care or school setting. The Appleton City School district follows this manual for specific policies regarding how communicable diseases are dealt with in the school setting. If you would like to view this manual at any time you may access it through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website at <http://health.mo.gov/living/healthcondiseases/communicable/>, and click on Control of communicable diseases: A Guide for School Administrators, Nurses, Teachers, Child Care Providers, and Parents or Guardians.

During certain times of the year we tend to see higher incidences of certain illnesses. For example, we tend to see more strep throat, respiratory and gastrointestinal illnesses during the winter months. I would like to remind you that everyone can help protect themselves and their families from many of these communicable diseases. It is important to start talking to your children at an early age about how to keep themselves healthy. Follow the *Habits for Good Health* listed below recommended by the Center for Disease Control.

Habits for Good Health

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze-throw the tissue away after you use it. If you do not have a tissue, cover your mouth and nose with the inside of your elbow.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water especially after you cough or sneeze. If you are not near water, use an alcohol based hand cleaner.
- Stay away as much as you can from people who are sick.
- If you or your child gets the flu, stay home from work or school. Do not go near other people so that you don't make them sick too.
- Try not to touch your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way, and can lead to illnesses such as influenza, strep throat, and Conjunctivitis (pink eye).
- If your child has symptoms of thick white or yellowish drainage from the eye, along with eye pain and redness, he/she may have pink eye. Discourage rubbing and touching the eyes. Keep the eyes wiped free of drainage, and wash hands often. Clean and disinfect all objects that come in contact with secretions from the eye. DO NOT SHARE anything that touches the eyes, such as towels, washcloths, eye makeup, contact solution, or eye drops. If these symptoms occur you will likely be asked to consult your physician to see if treatment is required before returning to work or school.

Head Lice

Head lice infestations are a common problem for children in childcare settings and schools. Anyone can get head lice. It is important to remember that head lice are not a health hazard or a sign of poor hygiene and are not responsible for the spread of any disease. Lice do not jump or fly; they only crawl, and pets do not transfer lice to people. In most cases, transmission occurs by direct head-to-head contact.

Tips for prevention:

- Assume that if your child attends any type of setting where other children are present then he/she may have been exposed to head lice, and parents should check their child(ren) for it regularly.
- Talk to your child on a regular basis about never sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, other hair grooming items and other hair accessories (barrettes, hair bows, headbands,etc.), towels, bedding, clothing, hats, and headgear.
- Discourage your child from close contact with other people to prevent head-to-head contact.
- Some sources suggest that the practice of daily blow drying the hair on a heat setting may also assist in the prevention of head lice; however this statement has not been proven.
- Some sources also suggest that regular use of all natural products such as (Tea Tree oil, Rosemary oil, Fairy Tales,etc.)are helpful in prevention, but again have not been proven by the FDA.
- Sleep overs are a common setting in which head lice are spread. When a child returns from a sleep over, check the child's head and launder any bedding that they brought home.
- Never initiate treatment for head lice unless there is a clear diagnosis with live lice. Never use chemically based lice shampoo for daily shampooing, as they can be harmful if not used specifically according to manufactures guidelines.
- If you do suspect that your child has head lice or wish to have them checked please contact the school nurse.

If you have any questions about communicable diseases in the school setting please feel free to contact the school nurse at (660)476-2161, option #7.

