



Photos taken from saisd.net, Sep 2012



PARENT HANDOUT ON HEAD LICE

OVERVIEW: Head lice (*pediculosis capitis*) are small parasitic insects. They live on the scales of humans, usually around the ears and along the nape of the neck. Head lice feed on the blood of their host. An adult louse can live usually 1-2 days off the human scalp.

SIGNS/SYMPTOMS: The most common symptom people experience is an itchy scalp. This is caused by an allergic reaction to the saliva of the louse when it bites the scalp to feed. Adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed and usually blends in with the person's hair color. The eggs, also

called *nits* are smaller and silver.

HOW IS IT TRANSMITTED? Head lice cannot fly or jump, they only crawl. They are most commonly spread from direct head to head contact but can also be spread by sharing personal items like hair brushes, combs, hats and pillows.

HOW DIAGNOSED: Head lice are confirmed by identifying a live adult louse on the person's scalp. Itchy scalp or nits cannot truly diagnose a head lice infestation.

PREVENTION MEASURES: The best

way to prevent head lice is to avoid head to head contact. However, if you suspect you or your child has been exposed to head lice it is important to check the scalp for lice or nits, especially around the ears and neck. If you are unsure you can contact your school nurse for assistance.

TREATMENT: Treatments for head lice usually come in the form of crème or shampoo for the hair. It is available at the drug store over the counter or through a prescription. It may also be necessary to remove the nits with a fine tooth comb, which takes time.

BOTTOM LINE:

- * Anyone can get head lice, it does not mean you have bad hygiene!
- * Head lice are spread by head to head contact and sharing items that touch your scalp.
- * If you suspect your child of having head lice, speak with your school nurse before sending them to school.
- * After treating someone in your household for lice, it is important to wash their sheets and clothing, vacuum carpets and soak brushes in HOT water for 10 minutes.

