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SEDGWICK COUNTY, KANSAS
COMMUNICATIONS

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September Is Head Lice Prevention Month

(Sedgwick County, Kansas) – September marks the 23rd annual National Head Lice Prevention Month. The Sedgwick County Health Department encourages parents to "screen, detect, remove, protect!" As with all communicable diseases, early detection is the best way to stop the spread of lice outbreaks.

Lice are tiny insects that live on humans and feed on blood. Head lice are usually found in the hair, on the back of the neck and behind the ears. Head lice are common where preschool and elementary school-age children share close quarters. This includes when children share hair supplies, at sleepovers or camp, through sport equipment, especially helmets, and while kids are at school. Adults can also get head lice, especially those who live with children. Lice can occur in people of all social and economic backgrounds, regardless of personal hygiene habits.

Someone with head lice may not exhibit any symptoms initially. An itchy scalp may occur weeks after lice have started to spread. Scratching can make the skin raw. Infection can occur if lice are not eliminated in a timely manner. A doctor or nurse can usually tell if lice are present by looking closely through the hair.

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The most common treatment for head lice is an over-the-counter cream, lotion, or shampoo. Putting the medication on the skin or scalp kills the lice and eggs. In some cases, a second treatment may be necessary to make sure that all the eggs are dead. If two or more treatments don't work, contact your health care provider as a prescription may be required. It is also very important to wash all potentially infested clothing and bedding in hot water.

If you have questions about head lice, contact the Sedgwick County Health Department at 660-7300 or visit www.sedgwickcounty.org. A fact sheet with more information on head lice can be found on this Web page, under Health Alerts. You can also go to www.headlice.org to find free downloads, images of actual lice and nits, answers to frequently asked questions, and lessons for kids.

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