

No HFS parent wants to receive a call from me that their child has head lice. A recent article by Sandy Mazza of SGNG reported on the widespread and growing problem of lice infestation. Across the US each year there are an estimated 6-12 million cases, affecting 1 in 20 children ages 5-17, and nearly always spreading to their mother or other family members.

Head lice have been around for over 70,000 years. Lice is not caused by dirty hair--lice prefer clean hair and do not discriminate by age, sex, race, or class. They do not infect animals, so don't blame the family pet. Lice are temperature sensitive, and the temperature of the human head is perfect for their survival.

Tell your children not to share hats, combs, brushes, or headbands. Group selfies can be a method of transmission--lice cannot fly or jump, but they need only 30 seconds to walk from an infected head to someone else.

A recent study by the Journal of Medical Entomology (the study of insects) found that traditional lice eradication products are only 28%-55% effective. So, what are your treatment options?

- *. The Hair Angels in Pasadena (577-2118) will remove all lice and eggs, and will clear students to return to school. They are also available to come to your home.

- *. Lice Clinics of America in Altadena (2550-0277) uses a new, FDA approved treatment that utilizes heat and a topical product. Parents will need to use a lice comb to remove the eggs.

- *. Over the counter medications should be used with caution and directions must be followed exactly. Lice are becoming resistant to some, and using a lice comb is necessary.

- *. Alternative treatments such as Listerine in conjunction with a lice comb. Details may be found at www.PeoplesPharmacy.com

Children who are treated at Hair Angels are given a certificate for readmission to class. Those who are treated by other methods must be checked by me before readmission.

If you have a daughter, keep her hair in a ponytail or pigtails. Long, flowing hair is more likely to get head lice.

Lastly, it is mandatory to notify school if your child has head lice. By alerting parents we can help stop it from spreading.