

Head Lice Survey Results

By Karen Williams, BSN

Last fall, Elementary staff completed a head lice survey. The results were collated from 40 surveys returned to me.

- 5 people got all 15 questions correct.
- 7 people got 5 or more questions wrong.
- There were only 4 of the 15 questions that no one missed.
- 1 teacher gave the survey to her class, and none of the students received a 100: 10 of the 15 students missed 5 or more questions.

The most frequently missed questions by the staff were:

14. I need to stay home from school until I have removed all nits and live head lice. The correct answer is False. (20 people missed this question) *Nits do not need to be removed. We do ask for a treatment to be done. If done properly this should kill the live lice, making it safe to return to school the next day. We recommend thorough daily hair combing until there is nothing found for 2 weeks to ensure that none of the nits hatch and cause a recurrence. There is no reason for someone to miss school during this process.*

5. Head lice look white in someone's hair. The correct answer is False. (17 people said this was true) *The louse itself is actually brown. The nit (if it is viable) is usually a shiny brownish/grey color. If they are white, they are usually old and not viable. If someone only has white nits in their hair, it means they had lice. It does not mean they currently have it nor are they contagious. If you see white in someone's hair it is more common for it to be from dandruff or other dryness.*

6. A child should be kept home if they have nits to prevent spread. The correct answer is False. (16 people thought this was true) *Nits are eggs, they cannot spread. The live adult is what transfers from one person to another, most frequently at sleepovers, where children tend to lay close to each other and often share pillows and blankets. Also by sharing personal items such as hair care items, hats, baseball helmets etc.. They do not spread from casual contact; they cannot spread from sitting near someone without the head to head contact.*

It was interesting for me to compile this information and to see what misconceptions people still have. It helps me see where further education is necessary both with the staff as well as with students' families. I continue to look for ways to share this information with as many people as possible.