

<p>MARBLEHEAD SCHOOL NURSES~SCHOOL HEALTH NEWS SEPTEMBER 2008</p>
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**A word about birthday celebrations...**

We would like to share our new policy regarding birthday parties that is consistent with the Marblehead Public Schools Wellness Policy adopted by the school committee in 2007.

Students will be recognized in the classroom by teachers and classmates in imaginative ways. The celebrations will be NON FOOD. We ask your cooperation in making our school a safe and healthy place for all.

**Let's Walk and Roll to School!!**

This year we would like to make an effort to get more families getting to school without the use of a car and fuel. Please watch for your school's flyer about the "Walking School Bus". Last Spring Bell School had 4 Walking Buses on Friday mornings. There were more than 50 children walking to School with Adult supervision. Everyone is aware of the benefits of walking: good for your health, good exercise, better for the environment, saves on fuel, you do not need a seat belt, and the kids love it!! If you would like to help get the Bus rolling in your School, contact Kelley Braun at [Kelley\\_braun@yahoo.com](mailto:Kelley_braun@yahoo.com) Let's not idle and honk, let's walk and talk!!!

*From Massachusetts Department of Public Health:*

**Be aware of Mosquito Borne Illnesses: West Nile Virus and EEE**

People have an important role to play in protecting themselves and their loved ones from illnesses caused by mosquitoes.

***Avoid Mosquito Bites***

**Be Aware of Peak Mosquito Hours.** The hours from dusk to dawn are peak biting times for many mosquitoes. Consider rescheduling outdoor activities that occur during evening or early morning.

**Clothing Can Help Reduce Mosquito Bites.** Wearing long-sleeves, long pants and socks when outdoors will help keep mosquitoes away from your skin.

**Apply Insect Repellent when outdoors.** Use a repellent with DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide), permethrin, picaridin (KBR 3023), oil of lemon eucalyptus [p-methane 3, 8-diol (PMD)] or IR3535 according to the instructions on the product label. DEET products should not be used on infants under two months of age and should be used in concentrations of 30% or less on older children. Oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under three years of age.

***Mosquito-Proof Your Home***

**Drain Standing Water.** Mosquitoes lay their eggs in standing water. Limit the number of places around your home for mosquitoes to breed by either draining or discarding items that hold water. Check rain gutters and drains. Empty any unused flowerpots and wading pools, and change water in birdbaths frequently.

**Install or Repair Screens.** Keep mosquitoes outside by having tightly-fitting screens on all of your windows and doors.

### ***Report Dead Birds***

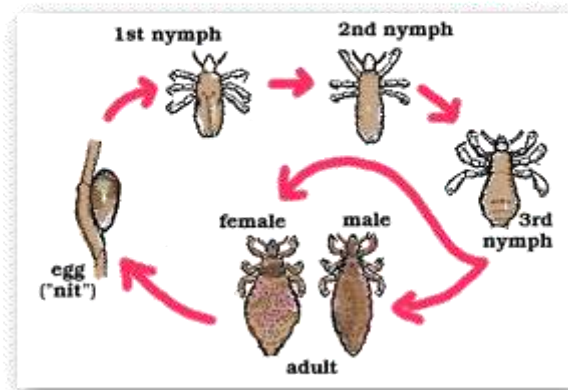
**Dead crows or blue jays** may be a sign that WNV is circulating among the birds and mosquitoes in your area. Call 1-866-MASS WNV to report a dead bird. By reporting dead birds, you can play an important role in monitoring WNV.

More information is available on the DPH website: [www.mass.gov/dph/wnv](http://www.mass.gov/dph/wnv).

### **A perennial nuisance: Head Lice**

Over the summer there has been an increased incidence of lice reported in Marblehead. Unfortunately, the school setting is often a place where lice can easily be spread. Please check your child's head periodically for nits and/or live lice. Early recognition, notification of close contacts and thorough treatment can help curtail the spread of lice.

## **Which Came First... the Itchin' or the Egg?**



**(The Life-Cycle of the Head Louse)**

#### WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are tiny insects that live only on people's scalps and hair. Head lice hatch from small eggs, called nits, that are firmly attached to individual hairs near the scalp and cannot be easily moved up or down the hair shaft (as could specks of dandruff or hair casings). Nits may be found throughout the hair, but are most often located at the back of the scalp, behind the ears, and at the crown of the head. Eggs hatch in about ten days, with new lice reaching adulthood in about two weeks. The female louse, about the size of a sesame seed, typically lives for twenty to thirty days and lays about six eggs a day. Lice live by biting and sucking blood from the scalp. Lice can survive off the body although generally not for longer than forty-eight hours.

The major symptom of head lice is itching caused by the bite of the louse. Persistent scratching of the head and back of the neck should be cause for concern. Red bite marks and scratch marks may be observed on the scalp and neck. A secondary bacterial infection can occur causing oozing or crusting. Swollen neck glands may also develop.

#### HOW DO YOU GET HEAD LICE?

Head lice should not be considered a sign of unclean individuals or homes. They may affect individuals of any age or gender. Anyone who has close contact with an infested individual or shares personal items can become infested. Lice are spread only

when they crawl from person to person directly or crawl onto shared personal items, such as combs, brushes, head coverings, clothing, bedding or towels. They cannot hop, jump or fly. An infested individual can transmit head lice to others continuously until undergoing treatment to kill the insects and eggs.

#### **WHAT DO I LOOK FOR?**

Diagnosis is usually made by detecting nits, tiny pearl gray, oval shaped specks attached to the hair near the scalp. In some cases, with close inspection, live lice may be seen moving on the scalp or in the hair close to the scalp.

#### **HOW IS IT TREATED?**

Treatment consists of getting rid of the lice from infested individuals, their surroundings and their personal items. All household members and individuals with close contact should be examined for lice and, if necessary, treated with one of the recommended shampoos or hair rinses. Pyrethrin products, available over-the-counter, are often recommended for treatment.

Please do not hesitate to contact your school nurse if you would like additional information.

## **Health Insurance**

Healthy children are ready to learn and have the best opportunity to reach their full potential in school. Every child in Massachusetts is eligible for some type of low cost health insurance plan care through MassHealth Children's Medical Security Plan. They use a single application form and are directed to the appropriate program based on income, family size, age and any disabilities. Children do not need a social security number to get the insurance. Recently, affordable health insurance plans for adults have been made available through Commonwealth Care.

[www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

MassHealth Customer Service Center 1-800-841-2900

Commonwealth Care Customer Services 1-877-MA-ENROLL (1-877-623-6765)

Children's Medical Security Plan 1-800-909-2677

Health Care for All Helpline 1-800-272-4232 can answer questions about a number of programs as well as assist in completing an application in many languages over the phone.

## **Mandated Screenings (M.G.L. c.71 s.57)**

Students are screened annually for hearing, vision, height weight. Students in grades 5-9 are also screened for scoliosis. Parents/guardians receive a written notice of any deviation from the accepted standards. Feedback from any referrals made to healthcare providers is requested.

Using the student's age, gender, height and weight, Body Mass Index (BMI) is calculated. BMI is a tool that can be useful in early identification of possible health risk factors among developing children and youth.

The results of the growth screening will be kept confidential in each student's school health record, and sent home to parents/guardians along with a description of the screening program and a recommendation to share the results with their child's primary health care provider.

Because students may react in a variety of ways to being weighed and measured in school, it is important that you be aware that this screening is taking place, and can respond appropriately to any concerns. For example, if a child makes a negative comment about his/her body, a sensitive response might be, “Kids come in different sizes and shapes.” You can help by being objective and open about your child’s concerns in your responses.

The school nurses have tracked trends in BMIs for students by grade and gender for the past several years. We have seen fluctuations in BMIs showing a general trend of a greater number of students in the 5-85 percentile. We applaud parent, community and school efforts to provide a healthful environment for our students.

### **MRSA Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus**

“Staph” is bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. About 25-30% of people carry staph on their bodies at any time. MRSA is a kind of staph that is resistant to some antibiotics. MRSA, and other staph, is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact or by contact with items that have been touched by people with staph, like towels or shared sports equipment. Most people with staph on their skin do not have infections or illness. They are “colonized” with staph. Staph infections start when the bacteria gets into a cut, scrape or other break in the skin.

Symptoms of infection from any staph including MRSA present with pimples, rashes, pus-filled boils that may be warm, painful, red or swollen. Impetigo can be caused by staph and/or MRSA. More serious infections such as severe skin infection, surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia can occur. Most of these are accompanied by fever, swelling and pain at a wound site, headache and fatigue.

Practicing good hygiene is the best way to prevent getting and spreading MRSA infections.

Good practices:

- Keep hands clean by washing frequently using soap and water or hand sanitizers
- Do not share towels, razors, soap, ointment
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered until healed
- Avoid contact with other people’s wounds or bandages
- Avoid whirlpools and hot tubs, especially if one has scrapes or open wounds
- Wash sporting equipment in hot water and wipe off nonwashable items such as helmets, pads and skin guards

### **Essential School Health Services Grant**

Marblehead School Nurses are proud to announce the receipt of the Essential School Health Services grant (\$101,000/year) from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. This multiyear competitive grant was awarded to 83 of the 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. Goals of the grant are to (a) strengthen the school health service infra-structure, (b) implement health education/tobacco control programs, (c) promote linkages with community providers and health insurance programs, and (d) implement school health data systems. Marblehead is additionally responsible for providing mentoring and health services support to Cohen Hillel Academy, Swampscott Public Schools and Salem Public Schools.