Health Matters
Newsletter

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Back to School - What You Should Know about Lice

It used to be that the discovery of head lice meant a child would immediately be sent home from school and not allowed to return until they were free of nits, (eggs attached to the hair shaft). However, new recommendations by the American Association of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses have changed this. The new recommendation is that students diagnosed at school with head lice do not need to be sent home early. Instead, they can be appropriately treated that evening and allowed to return to class the next day. Proper treatment will kill all live, crawling lice. Nits may still be visible even after successful treatment.

Contrary to urban legend, head lice do not carry or spread disease. Because of this, head lice is not a condition which needs to be reported to public health. Another common misconception is that head lice are caused by poor personal hygiene or an unclean home. This is simply not true. Any person, regardless of socioeconomic status, is vulnerable to becoming infested with head lice if exposed.

All infested household members/close contacts (and their bedmates) should be treated at the same time. In addition to pharmaceutical treatment, and to rid the house of nits, items worn or used 2 days prior to lice treatment can be machine washed and dried using hot water and hot air cycles. Other items can be sealed in a plastic bag for 2 weeks, to ensure nits are dead.

For more information on treatment of head lice or new recommendations for school children, visit: http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html

Governor Signs SB277 into Law


Effective January 2016, SB 277 will eliminate personal and religious exemptions from immunization requirements for children in child care and public and private schools. The law will also
allow personal belief exemptions (PBEs) submitted before January 1, 2016 to remain valid until a pupil reaches Kindergarten or 7th grade. The following exempt categories will not have to meet existing immunization requirements for entry:

- Home-based private schools
- Students enrolled in an independent study program who do not receive classroom-based instruction
- Special education services specified in an individualized education program

Note: Students in the above categories will still need to provide immunization records to their schools before entry, and schools will still need to report to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) the immunization status of all students at the existing checkpoints of child care, kindergarten, and 7th grade.

In addition, the law allows medical and personal beliefs exemptions from any new immunization requirement initiated by CDPH for school and child care attendance. For more details, read the text of SB 277 and the Governor’s signing message. Further information about the implementation of SB 277 will become available by 2016.

### Assessing the Health of Our Community

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department is initiating a comprehensive health assessment of our community. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the current health needs of residents in Santa Barbara County and to help identify where and how we can improve the health of our community. The assessment includes a review of various sources of data along with a survey of County residents. We want to hear from everyone in our community!

The Community Health Assessment includes a personal survey component. The short survey asks about personal health and wellness as well as priorities to improve health. Individual responses from Santa Barbara County residents will add vital information to our new assessment. Please help the Public Health Department reach the goal of over 5000 surveys answered by completing an electronic version of the survey at:


In the first month of the live survey, over 1300 surveys have been completed!

The Community Health Assessment is expected to be available in March 2016 and will include the compiled profiles from; personal surveys, updated reports and data. Input from colleagues in the community, including area hospitals, medical clinics, and social services will help bring perspective to the data. We will continue to work on policies and services that will protect the public’s health and support long and healthy lives of everyone in our community.

### Epidemiology Program Updates

  - 2009-2014 Sexually Transmitted Disease Trends in Santa Barbara County