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Be careful of what kids can bring home from school.



Lice, Scabies, Impetigo, Ringworm and Cold Sores

With back to school around the corner, most parents are concerned with what their children need to take to school to begin a new year. Equally important, though, is what your child can bring home, in the form of skin diseases.

Infestations (lice and scabies) and infections (impetigo, ringworm and cold sores) are a parent's worst back-to-school nightmares. Add to that, outbreaks of acne from stress, and children can come home with more than homework assignments.

The relatively "new kid on the block" to worry about is the "super-bug" MRSA. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus is considered one of the "super-bugs" – a staph bacterium that's resistant to broad-spectrum antibiotics usually prescribed to treat it. "Community" acquired MRSA can be particularly dangerous in children, often entering the body through a cut or scrape. It can cause widespread infection. Children may be more susceptible to MRSA because their immune systems are not fully developed. Participating in contact sports, sharing towels, athletic equipment, razors, and being in crowded or unsanitary conditions are contributing risk factors.

It's a good idea not to share anything with other students – makeup, combs, Chap-Stick, clothing, washcloths.

Pictured: Austin Funk, Grandson of Dr. Torok M.D.

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LICE

Lice typically affect the head and can jump from one child to another. Because children touch one another and share hats and combs, lice can very easily infect an entire school and family once a youngster contracts it. If you part the hair, you will see little white eggs at the base of the hair shaft and live insects above the ear and back of the head. Lice itch. Contrary to popular belief, lice don't come from being dirty. Lice are treated with Kwell shampoo and a vinegar rinse. A 100 percent cure is to massage Cetaphil cleanser into the hair and scalp for 15 minutes, blow dry for 15 minutes and rinse. This treatment suffocates the lice.



SCABIES

While lice are visible to the naked eye and are on top of the skin, scabies mites burrow under the skin. They itch the worst at night and like the webs of the hands and palms of younger children. A female can lay 100 eggs per night and they hatch within a week. Once exposed, it can be as long as three weeks before symptoms appear. Scabies infestations, like lice, can become epidemic if not treated early and in all exposed children, family members and friends. Treatment includes an oral medication, Stromectol.



IMPETIGO

Wrestlers and close contact sports participants are especially at risk for impetigo and any of the contagious diseases. The staphylococcal and streptococcal bacteria enters a cut or a scratch and impetigo spreads like wildfire. Be on the lookout for sores around the lips or nose, which turn into a honey-colored crust within days. This is a highly contagious disease and must be treated with an oral antibiotic when extensive. Because it is a streptococcal infection, kidney problems can occur just as in strep throat.



RINGWORM

Ringworm is actually not a worm, but a fungus called a dermatophyte. It appears as a red raised scaly patch, often with sharply defined edges that may blister and ooze. Often the blister is flesh-toned on the inside and red on the outside giving the condition its name. Topical creams can treat ringworm anywhere except on the scalp. For ringworm on the scalp, an oral tablet, Lamisil, is prescribed. Otherwise it can invade the hair follicle.



COLD SORES AND STRESS

With the excitement and anticipation of a new school year, as well as sports, homework and dating, comes a lot of stress. Sometimes this stress is manifested in cold sores (herpes simplex) and acne. Stress can aggravate cold sores as well as contact sports, sunburns and dry, chapped lips. Keeping the lips hydrated is the best way to prevent cold sores. Students should not share lipsticks and drinks. Touching the blisters or kissing when they are active should be avoided. An oral medication, Valtrex, is very helpful in preventing these outbreaks.

Acne is another manifestation of stress, affecting 70 percent of teens. Have your children see the physicians and physician assistants at Trillium Creek early in the school year so they can provide treatments such as topical medications, cleansers, non-comedogenic makeup, oral medications and sunblocks to clear the acne. Caffeine should be limited, as it can aggravate acne.

In females, acne can be hormonally driven. So birth control pills are sometimes used to regulate hormones, as well as antibiotics, topicals such as Retin-A and benzoyl peroxide, and in severe cases, Accutane. Girls should avoid heavy makeup and use a mineral-based makeup, like the H&H Science product line inside Trillium Creek. It doesn't block pores and provides excellent coverage.

In boys, sports can aggravate acne. In sports that use helmets, the area where the helmet touches the skin is a reservoir for sweat and bacteria providing an excellent breeding ground for acne. The same types of treatments (except birth control) are used to treat acne in males and females. **TC**