August 1, 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Health and safety at our schools is a high priority. The Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE) and the Department of Health (DOH) would like to focus on three important issues: heat illness, head lice, and proper hygiene. The following information and helpful health tips are provided to raise awareness and provide useful information.

Preparing for Heat
The upcoming months are expected to be very warm. In dealing with the warm temperatures we recommend that students do the following:

- Wear light-weight, loose-fitting, cotton or other fast drying clothing;
- Carry a water bottle, which can be refilled by your child as needed;
- Use a cap with a brim that shades your child’s face from the sun for outdoor activities; and
- Avoid getting overheated and to stay hydrated. They should let their teacher, family member, or guardian know if they are feeling dizzy.

If your child has physical and/or health needs that may require an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) updated or developed for heat related illness, please contact your School Health Aide. They will refer you to a Public Health Nurse (PHN) assigned to your school. The PHN will assess your child’s health needs and work with the parent/guardian and your child’s doctor to update or develop an EAP. Consider having an EAP if your child has a medical condition such as asthma, history of life-threatening or severe allergic reactions, diabetes, seizure disorders, and technology-dependent or medically fragile conditions.

“Heat-Related Guidelines” are posted at all schools. It can also be accessed online at HawaiiPublicSchools.org.

Treating Head Lice (ukus)
The DOH worked with HIDOE on new guidance for proper head lice management based on guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Association of School Nurses.

The perception of ukus in the past was magnified by the way children were handled who had them. Ukus sometimes are confused with bedbugs, which they are not. Importantly, ukus do not transmit disease and should not be a reason for children to miss school or be shunned.
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The school health practice for ukus will include:

• Inspection by the school health aide of a student who may have ukus;
• Notification of the parent/guardian that the student has ukus;
• After the parent is notified, the student will return to class where they will remain until the end of the school day, unless the parent opts to take their child home to begin treatment; and
• Provision of information on home treatment to the parent/guardian.

Some tips on managing ukus are:

• Check your child’s hair at least once a week, and if ukus or nits (eggs) are found, treat promptly. You may call your child’s physician for possible treatment solutions, some of which may be covered by insurance;
• Educate yourself and your child about ukus and to treat them if they are found—these are the best prevention measures; and
• Consider keeping your child’s hair slicked back or tied up to reduce risk of acquiring them.

For more information on ukus, please visit http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/disease/head-lice/.

Hygiene Habits

Good health habits for preventing flu and other diseases include proper hand washing to help stop the spread of germs at home, work, and school. Other everyday preventive actions include:

• Avoid close contact with people who have infectious diseases;
• If your child gets sick with fever and cough or sore throat, have your child stay home, except to get medical care, for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone. The fever should be gone without the use of a medicine, like acetaminophen (for example, Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (for example, Motrin® or Advil®);
• While sick, limit contact with others as much as possible to keep from infecting them;
• Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze;
• Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it;
• Wash your hands often with soap and water;
• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth;
• If your child gets sick with vomiting and/or diarrheal illness, they should stay home until those symptoms resolve; and
• For athletes, shower immediately after the activity, do not share towels, use a separate towel for their body and their feet, and always use a new clean towel.

For more information on everyday healthy habits, please visit http://health.hawaii.gov/docd/dib/infectious-disease-surveillance/handwashing/.

We appreciate your assistance in keeping your child healthy throughout the school year. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school’s PHN.

Very truly yours,

Kathryn S. Matayoshi  
Superintendent

Virginia Pressler, M.D.  
Director of Health