

Health Matters



let's talk

YOU TOLD US

Last month, we asked: What do you think is the best way to keep your kids healthy and safe from germs at school?

- Tell my kids to wash their hands frequently during the day. **47%**
- Put hand sanitizer in their backpacks and ask them to use it. **18%**
- Accept that germs are a part of life and treat my kids' colds when they happen. **35%**

NOW TELL US

How diligent are you about doing a monthly breast self-examination (BSE)?

- I rarely do a BSE because I forget, or feel that I don't really know how to do it.
- I make sure I do it most months.
- I don't do it because the information on BSEs is confusing or conflicting.

Cast your vote at canadianliving.com/october. Results will appear in the November issue.

GETTING AHEAD OF LICE

If your children's school calls to say your kids have lice, don't cringe in horror. Head lice is the second most communicable affliction, after the common cold, among school-age kids, says Dawn Mucci, director of Lice Squad Canada in Innisfil, Ont. Here's how to spot, treat and prevent lice.

- **Spot it.** Inspect your kids' hair weekly by checking the hot spots where lice most often lay their eggs: around the ears, crown of the head and nape of the neck, says Mucci. Eggs vary in colour from brownish-yellow to caramel.
- **Treat it.** Lice Squad Canada removes the eggs using a special comb that you can purchase from the company. This prevents new lice from hatching. To kill the actual bugs, the Canadian Paediatric Society recommends over-the-counter products that contain pyrethrin or permethrin, such as Nix Cream Rinse. These are safe for kids of all ages. The society warns that products

containing lindane can be toxic to kids younger than two years old, and Resultz is not suitable for kids under four. Mucci adds that common home remedies, such as coating hair with mayonnaise, don't work.

If your kids have lice, there's no need to disinfect the whole house. Vacuum your carpets, and kill bugs on hats, pillowcases and other items that have come in contact with the children's heads by washing items in hot water and drying with high heat for 20 to 30 minutes. Storing these items in an airtight plastic bag for 24 to 48 hours also does the trick.

- **Prevent it.** You don't get head lice from bad hygiene, says Mucci, who adds that lice don't spread disease. Lice don't hop, jump or fly; they only spread through head-to-head contact or hair-to-item contact. Tell your kids to keep some distance from their friends when playing, and not to share hats, combs, hairbrushes or headphones. — Elizabeth Zahur