



NORTHBROOK SCHOOL DISTRICT 27

PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE)

Head lice are often a fact of life for school age children. Our purpose here is to share accurate information regarding head lice. See the list of resources at the end of this letter for a link to a helpful YouTube demonstration of detection and treatment of head lice.

General Information:

- Head lice are very small wingless insects that live on the human scalp and in the hair.
- Lice are grayish-white eggs attached to the hair shaft, especially at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. These eggs (nits) are small, about the size of a pinhead, and resemble dandruff. Eggs (nits) are attached to the hair shaft with a cement-like substance by the female louse and are difficult to remove. Dandruff, on the other hand, is easily brushed away.
- An active infestation means either live lice or clusters of nits within one-quarter inch of the scalp. Head lice rarely (if ever) cause direct harm, and they are not known to transmit infectious agents from person-to-person and they should not be considered as a medical or public health problem.
- The most common symptom of head lice is an itchy scalp, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. To check for lice, part your child's hair and look at the scalp for nits or eggs, small white or yellow brown specks that are firmly attached to the hair shafts.
- Mass screening of the entire school will not generally be conducted. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Harvard School of Public Health DO NOT recommend mass school screenings because they are highly subject to error and over-diagnosis. It is very difficult to detect active from inactive infestation. Some children may have inactive nits from months past. While these nits were always inactive and will not hatch, mass screening could cause concern for no reason.

Transmission:

- Head lice do not jump or fly, they crawl. Transmission in most cases occurs by direct contact with the head of another infested individual. Indirect spread through contact with personal belongings of an infested individual (combs, brushes, hats, scarves, coats), and/or by lying on a bed, couch, pillow, carpet, or stuffed animal that has recently been in contact with an infested person. Remember that the infestation must be active for this contact to be problematic.

Incubation Period:

- Active louse eggs will hatch in one week WHEN KEPT AT BODY TEMPERATURE.
- Lice cannot live off a human host for more than 24 hours, nor will eggs hatch without the blood source of a human host.

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Procedures:

- The custodians will disinfect all classrooms occupied by infected student(s) at the end of the school day. The custodian will use a disinfectant solution that is safe for the environment to wash down the surfaces in the classroom, vacuum, and dust.
- If you would like to have your child (ren) checked by the school nurse, please send a note to school indicating such.
- Students will not be sent home from school unless an active case of head lice is found, (i.e., either live lice or clusters of nits within one-quarter inch of the scalp). If nits are detected, that student's parent/guardian will be notified. A child will be allowed to return to school after proper treatment. Children are requested to report to the nurse for a head check upon return to school.

Treatment for Active Infestation:

- Prescription for medicated shampoo or rinse by private physician.
- Use of over-the-counter medicated shampoo recommended by pharmacist.
- Inspect hair for nits daily for the next two weeks and remove all nits by hand or with a fine tooth metal comb. Plastic combs are generally not sufficient.
- Follow all shampoo directions EXACTLY.
- See YouTube video link below.

Methods of Control for Households of Confirmed Cases of Lice Infestation:

- Inspect family members for lice.
- Do NOT use medicated shampoo as a preventative measure of treatment. Only use such products for confirmed cases of lice.
- Disinfect combs and brushes with medicated shampoo.
- Disinfect recently used articles of clothing and bedding by HOT machine washing with detergent or by dry cleaning.
- Thoroughly vacuum and dust contaminated areas.
- DO NOT panic and begin disinfecting your entire wardrobe and house. Remember, lice cannot live without a human host for more than 24 hours.

Sources for further information:

[American Academy of Dermatology](#)

[Center for Disease Control](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

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