

## Wyandotte Public Schools Head Lice (Pediculosis)

### What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insects 1/8 inch long that live on the human head. Color varies from light to dark tan to grayish-white. They do not jump or fly, but crawl from hair to hair and feed on blood from scalp bites.



### What is a nit?



Nits are the tiny, smooth, plump, teardrop shaped eggs of lice. Unlike dandruff and other matter they are strongly glued to the hair shaft, often close to the scalp. Nits are usually tan to grayish white but color may vary. Nits can be found anywhere on the head, but are often around the ears and the back of the neck. Nits hatch in 7-10 days.

### Do they cause disease?

No. Head lice do not spread disease. Many children have no itching. However, head lice can cause severe itching due to sensitivity to louse saliva. Skin infections may occur from scratching.

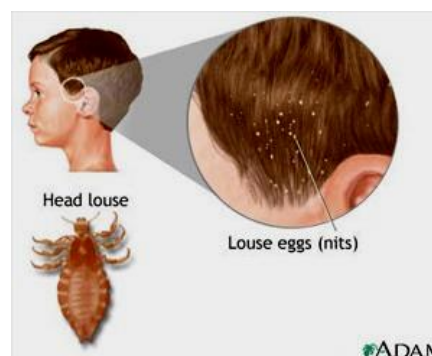
### How do you get head lice?

Anyone can get head lice, rich or poor, clean or dirty. Head lice can be passed from one person to another in a number of ways.

- Head to head contact.
- Sharing personal items like combs, brushes, towels and bedding.
- Sharing clothing such as hats, coats, scarves, ribbons and hair decorations.
- Placing heads on furniture, rugs or car seats recently used by someone with lice.
- Head lice are not a risk to pets or other animals.

### What are signs and symptoms to look for?

- Itching of the head, especially around the ears and the back of the neck.
- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping: head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head from scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected with bacteria found on the person's skin.
- Nits. Small white specks in the hair such as dandruff can be confused with nits. Dandruff can be easily removed, while nits are glued strongly to the hair.
- Adult lice may or may not be seen. Because they are very small, move quickly and avoid light, they can be difficult to find.



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### **What should I do if I suspect head lice?**

1. Purchase an over the counter or prescription head lice shampoo from a store and follow the directions carefully. The shampoo does not remove the nits.
2. Remove all of the nits and lice from the hair. Many nits can be removed with a nit comb. The smaller nits must be removed with your fingers as they are too small for the comb to remove. Sit behind your child in a room with good lighting to comb through the hair, one section at a time. Removed nits and lice should be placed directly in a trash container. Complete nit removal is time consuming but important for successful treatment.
3. Check family members daily for 10 days, and remove all nits found in order to avoid re-infestation. Continue checking periodically for 3 weeks.
4. If the package directions indicate, apply a second treatment 7-10 days later to kill lice that hatch after the initial treatment. **Do not over apply.**

### **Is shampooing enough? NO**

1. Machine wash all washable clothing and bedding used in the last 2 days with hot water at 130 degrees for at least 10 minutes, and then dry items on high heat for at least 30 minutes. Please remember to also wash hats, coats and scarves.
2. Items that are not washable should be dry-cleaned or stored in tightly sealed plastic bags for at least 14 days at room temperature or for 24 hours in below freezing temperatures. This includes stuffed animals and other stuffed toys.
3. Combs, brushes and hair ornaments used by the infected person should be immersed in water hotter than 130 degrees F, Lysol, rubbing alcohol or a pediculicide for one hour.
4. Upholstered furniture, pillows, mattresses, carpeting and car seats should be vacuumed thoroughly.

**THE ABOVE STEPS NEED TO BE DONE IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FIRST SHAMPOOING AND AGAIN IF A SECOND SHAMPOO IS PART OF THE TREATMENT.**

### **Can head lice be prevented?**

Measures can be taken to lessen the risk of getting head lice.

1. Items such as combs, brushes, hats, scarves and clothing that have contact with the head should not be shared.
2. Hats should be placed in sleeves or pockets of coats and jackets when not being worn.
3. To prevent the spread of lice if found:
  - ✓ Check all family members
  - ✓ Notify school
  - ✓ Notify parents of children's playmates
4. Shampooing with a head lice shampoo will not prevent someone from getting head lice.