

Lice (Pediculosis)

Dear Parents:

There has been a case of HEAD LICE reported/diagnosed in your child's classroom. Please check your child on a daily basis for the next 14 days. Live lice move very quickly and may even move to the top of the head when you examine the lower areas such as nape of neck, behind ears, etc.

What are Lice?

Lice are grayish, do not have wings, and are about 1/16th inch long. They are not like fleas. They do not jump or fly but crawl very fast. Nits (lice egg cases) are stuck tightly to the hair shaft and are not easily removed. Nits and lice are not carried on your pets. If you are unsure if your child has lice and/or nits, please contact the school nurse.



What are the signs or symptoms?

- Intense itching/scratching of the scalp, especially behind the ears and nape of the neck
- Scratch marks on the scalp
- Sometimes glands on the back of the neck and behind the ears are swollen
- Tiny whitish eggs (nits) on the hair shafts, especially behind the ears and nape of the neck. When looking for lice and nits use good lighting; sometimes a flashlight is helpful.
- Nits will usually be found closest to the scalp rather than at the ends of hair shafts. These will hatch in 7-10 days.

What are the incubation and contagious periods?

- Incubation Period: 7 - 12 days from laying to hatching of eggs. Lice can reproduce about 2 weeks after hatching if they are getting their blood meals from the scalp.
- Contagious Period: Until live lice are no longer present. Head lice will not go away or die off on their own.

How is it spread?

- Person to person by direct contact or rarely by shared objects (combs, brushes, barrettes, hats, scarves, bike helmets, etc.)

What is the treatment?

- Check all family members once you see nits in any one person's hair. Contact your physicians who will often prescribe an effective pediculicide shampoo for each person with lice/nits. This is especially important concerning infants, pregnant women and nursing mothers. Also, ask about products that aid in nit removal (like rinses). Remember that these products are pesticides. Follow the package directions carefully. Do not use them as prevention if your child does not have lice. They do not prevent lice infestation.
- All medicines are applied directly to the hair. There are no internal medications. These medicated shampoos make the hair feel very dry. A good hair conditioner may be useful after future regular shampoos.
- Remove all nits with special nit removal comb provided with most of the lice shampoo products.
Combing Hints:
 - Work with small sections (1 inch or smaller) of hair
 - Comb from the scalp all the way through to the tip of hair
 - Clean comb off after each stroke
 - Dampen hair with spray bottle of water if necessary
 - Pin back each section of hair until all hair is examined
- Water for cleaning or soaking should be at least 130o F. Soak hair care items (combs, brushes, barrettes etc.) in this very hot water and the same medication solution used on the hair at least 10 minutes.
- Wash all clothes, bed linens, towels etc. in very hot water, then dry on hot cycle in dryer at least 20 minutes. Non-washables such as stuffed animals, headphones, wool clothing etc. must be dry cleaned or stored in sealed plastic bags at room temperature for at least two weeks. Small non-metal items can be microwaved 60 seconds.
- VACUUM EVERYWHERE!! Vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture, car seats, etc. House and school do not have to be "fumigated" with general insecticides. Careful vacuuming is very effective.

Additional Information

- Please report episodes of confirmed Head Lice to the Nurse's office as soon as possible. Please contact us even if your child developed Head Lice on a non-school day (weekend, holiday, vacation).
- Consult your physician if your child's Head Lice is resisting treatment.
- Lice infestation is not a sign of poor hygiene. In fact, lice prefer clean healthy hair. They do not prefer adults or children, males or females. Good control is a result of thoroughness in treatment.
- Always consult your physician if you see nits on the eyebrows or eyelashes, or if your child develops allergic signs/symptoms to the shampoo, a secondary infection, or fever.

When can my child return to school?

Students with diagnosed Head Lice must be examined by the School Nurse before returning to the classroom. Please come to the Nurse's office with your child after treatment at home. The Nurse will examine your child and confirm with you that your child's hair is free of infestation.

If you have any questions, please call your School Nurse.

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