

FERNDAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 502
Ferndale, WA 98248

The spread of head lice is common among school age children. It is recommended that you check your child's head weekly at home. The following information below may be helpful to identify a head lice infestation and reduce the spread to others.

Head Lice

Head lice infestation in children is a common and pervasive problem. The good news is that lice do not transmit any diseases and are considered a 'nuisance' rather than a public health problem by the Health Department as well as the Centers for Disease Control and most doctors.

Here are a few facts about head lice:

Lice can only crawl; they do not jump or fly. This means that head-to-head contact is the most likely way to contract lice. Lice do not live more than 24-48 hours without a human host. The good news about these facts is that we can use prevention to interrupt the cycle of transmission. According to researchers in Florida, "Parents are the key to detecting and preventing head lice." They recommend that parents check their child's head for the presence of lice and nits (eggs) on a weekly basis. Keeping long hair in braids or ponytails, not sharing combs, hats or hair accessories may be helpful in preventing transmission. Please remember that anywhere kids congregate, such as the mall, theatre, restaurants, clubs and schools, lice will be there.

If you have questions about how to detect lice on your child or how to treat an infestation, please consult your health care provider. Other helpful resources can be found on the Center for Disease Control website at www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html. If you need printed material please contact your school office or health care provider.

How to identify head lice infestation:

The CDC indicates misdiagnosis of head lice infestation is common. Finding a live nymph or adult louse on the scalp or hair of a person best makes the diagnosis of head lice infestation.

Because adult and nymph lice are very small, move quickly, and avoid light, they may be difficult to find. Use of a fine-toothed louse comb may facilitate identification of live lice. If crawling lice are not seen, **finding nits attached firmly within ¼ inch of the base of hair shafts suggests, but does not confirm, the person is infested.** Nits frequently are seen on hair behind the ears and near the back of the neck. If you need assistance with determining if nits are present before starting a treatment, you may contact your school nurse or Health Care Provider.

Head lice and nits can be visible with the naked eye, although use of a magnifying lens may be necessary to find crawling lice or to identify a developing nymph inside a viable nit. Nits are often confused with other particles found in hair such as dandruff, hair spray droplets, and dirt particles.

Treatment options:

Consult your Health Care Provider for recommendations based on your child's individual health care needs.