

## Whitehall-Coplay School District

Educational Health Services

### HEAD LICE (PEDICULOSIS)

We are continuing to find students with head lice. This is an increasing problem throughout the country. For your family's protection and to prevent spreading lice to others, it is recommended that parents check their children about once a week.

**WHO GETS LICE?** - Anyone. Frequent, regular shampooing does not prevent lice. Younger children seem to catch them more frequently because of more close contact with one another. Animals do not carry or contract head lice.

**HOW DO YOU GET THEM?** - They walk, they do not fly or hop. They travel from person to person directly (two heads touching) or are transferred via personal articles (i.e. combs, brushes, hats, pillowcases, etc.)

**FACTS ABOUT LICE** - The adult louse is a wingless insect less than 1/8" long and is a pale brownish-gray. Lice do not carry disease. They bite the scalp causing itching. They move quickly and avoid light so they are often difficult to see.

The female louse lays 3-6 eggs (nits) per day and may live up to 30 days.

**FACTS ABOUT NITS** - The nits (egg sacs) of lice are cemented to human hair with nature's own superglue. The nits appear as small, silvery oval-shaped specks that look like dandruff. But they are very difficult to remove. The nits hatch in 7-10 days.

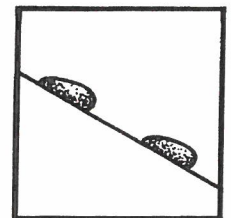


**Students with head lice will be excluded from school until they are nit free.**

#### WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD COMES HOME WITH HEAD LICE:

Don't panic. Don't blame. Anyone—adult or child—can get head lice. Head lice are passed from person to person by direct contact or on shared objects (pillows, combs, hats, towels, etc.). It has nothing to do with cleanliness and does not reflect on you as a parent. The problem is easily managed. Just follow the instructions below:

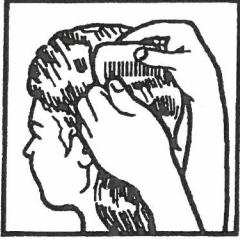
1. Check every member of the family.  
Look for tiny silvery egg sacs (nits) on hair shafts, near the scalp, especially at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Head lice are small brownish-gray insects without wings. Any family member with lice or nits must be treated.



2. Head lice treatment.  
Treatment is a two step process involving 1) the use of a medicated pediculicidal product and 2) removing ALL nits. Proceed as follows:
  - a. Remove child's shirt and provide a towel to cover the eyes. (This is essential.) Do not treat in the bathtub or shower, but have the child lean over the sink (this confines the lice product to the scalp/neck).
  - b. Use one of several louse remedies (pediculicidal product) available at your pharmacy. Some are available by prescription, some over the counter. All these products must be used carefully, observing all safety guidelines. Also consider:

(1) consulting your obstetrician if you are pregnant or nursing (whether treating yourself or others); (2) consulting your physician before treating anyone with extensive cuts or scratches on the head or neck, or anyone using other medications. **DO NOT USE THESE PRODUCTS ON INFANTS.\***

**DO READ ALL PACKAGE INFORMATION BEFORE USING THESE PRODUCTS.\*\***  
**AVOID PERSONAL LICE SPRAYS.**



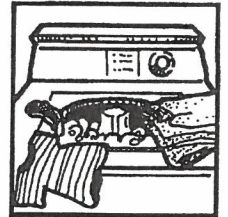
- c. Although it can take time and sometimes be difficult, “nit picking” or removing all nits will insure complete treatment. Louse products do not kill all the nits, and survivors will hatch into crawling lice within 7-10 days, generating a cycle of self-reinfestation. Even dead nits will cling to the hair and cause uncertainty about reinfestation. Nit removal can be accomplished with a special metal combing tool manufactured for this purpose or by picking them out with the fingernails.  
Note: Nit combing is best accomplished with hair which is dry or slightly damp. Discard nits into plastic bag and seal for disposal.

3. Following nit removal, have child put on clean clothing.

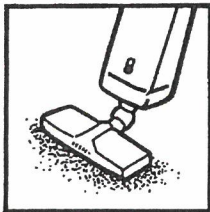
4. A daily nit check is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment and then check should become part of routine home hygiene. You may have to retreat in 7-10 days if there is evidence of new nits or newly-hatched lice. (Regardless of precautions taken at home, reinfestation from others can still take place.)  
Treatment itself can cause itching; do not treat again on the basis of itchiness alone.

#### TREATMENT OF PERSONAL ARTICLES AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens which have been in contact with the infested person during the last three days. Use hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Non-washables such as stuffed animals, sleeping bags, headphones, helmets, etc. can be vacuumed, dry cleaned or stored in tightly sealed plastic bag at room temperature for two weeks.



2. Vacuum everywhere. Rugs, upholstered furniture and mattresses, even carseats should be carefully vacuumed to pick up any living lice or nits attached to fallen hairs. Discard vacuum bag into sealed plastic bag for disposal. The use of insecticidal sprays is not recommended and strongly discouraged as it may be harmful to family members and pets and is of questionable benefit.



3. Soak combs, brushes, etc. in hot water 5-10 minutes. Also soak hair barrettes, ribbons, head bands, etc.



#### REPORTING CASES

Don't be embarrassed to notify your child's school (daycare, camp, etc.) so other parents can be alerted to a possible outbreak. Also notify your child's playmate's parents. Parental cooperation will help protect all children including your own.

\* Lice/nits on infants should be removed manually.

\*\* Package directions for prescription NIX suggest it is not necessary to remove nits. The Health Department recommends nit removal following treatment with all products. **Students with head lice will be excluded from school until they are nit free.**

For more information contact your school nurse, Health Department, or National Pediculosis Association, P.O. Box 610189, Newton, MA 02461 (781) 449-NITS (6487), [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)