

Head Lice Information for Parents

Head lice will be a problem from time to time in schools and it is important to work together as a school community to minimize the frustration caused by the problem. You should routinely examine your child's head at least weekly. Head Lice are little bugs; a full grown louse is about the size of a sesame seed. They crawl quickly when touched. They lay lots of eggs (also known as nits). Nits are usually at nape of the neck/behind the ears and close to the scalp. Nits are oval; white or grey in color and about the size of a knot of thread. They are firmly attached to the hair shaft. To determine whether or not you are seeing a nit try sliding it down the hair shaft using your fingers. Nits will be difficult to move, whereas dandruff and other items slide easily.

If crawling lice or nits are found, all household members should be examined for crawling lice and nits every 2-3 days. Persons with live (crawling) lice or nits within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or less of the scalp should be treated.

To eliminate head lice successfully, it is very important that all treatment instructions and steps be carefully followed and completed.

Both over-the-counter and prescription products are available. You may wish to contact your health care provider or pharmacist for additional information about which product they recommend.

Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice. For more information visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html> or contact your school nurse.

News on Head Lice

If your child goes to the dentist and doesn't have cavities do you stop brushing their teeth? Likewise, just because your child does not have head lice, doesn't mean you should stop checking their hair. Head lice are a common problem among children so weekly hair checks should become a routine part of hair hygiene. It is much easier to get rid of a head lice infestation if it is caught early. In addition to routine checks it is a good idea to check your child's head before and after attending a sleepover.

Head lice are small bugs, no bigger than a sesame seed and will most often be found behind the ears or at the nape of the neck. Head lice eggs are called nits; grey-white in color; about the size of a knot of thread and they will be firmly attached to the hair.

To check for head lice

- You will need a well lit area.
- Part the hair section by section and look closely, especially at the scalp for lice. They will move very quickly but can most easily be seen moving along the part you just made.
- Look for nits. Nits from a current infestation will be found within ¼ inch from the scalp.

If you suspect your child has head lice, notify your school nurse. In addition, the entire family should be inspected for head lice. Head lice are not fussy about the heads they live on. There is no connection between head lice and the length of someone's hair or the cleanliness of their hair, body, home or school environment. People of all races can get head lice. Head lice don't fly or jump – they crawl from head to head. This often happens when people play or work closely together. Therefore, head lice are most often found among children ages 3-10, and their families.

Tips for preventing your child from getting head lice:

- Discourage head-to-head contact and sharing of hats, scarves, hairbrushes and combs.
- Tie long hair back.
- Always send your child's own sleeping bag, towel and pillow to sleepovers.
- You cannot prevent head lice by using head lice shampoos or products – use them only if you have head lice.
- Check young school age children weekly for head lice; more often if there has been a known exposure to someone with head lice.

What to do if your child has head lice:

- Notify your child's school nurse. The nurse can give you specific instructions for the treatment of head lice.
- Check the heads of all family members.
- All family members with head lice should be treated at the same time.
- Tell all close contacts of the person with head lice to check their head.

Important points to remember:

1. Be sensitive to your child's feelings!
2. Lack of cleanliness does not cause head lice.
3. Both children and adults can get head lice.
4. Short hair does not prevent the spread of lice.
5. Head lice do not live on dogs, cats or other animals.