

*Sussex Wantage Regional School District  
27 Bank St. Sussex, NJ 07461*

*March 2017*

**Re: Possible Head Lice**

Dear Parents/Guardians:

As your child's school nurses, we wanted to alert you that this is the time of year when head lice can be prominent. An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States, most commonly among children ages 3 to 11. It is the parent/guardian responsibility to monitor your school age children for head lice, and notify your child's school nurse if your child has it.

Head lice are not dangerous. They do not transmit disease, but they do spread easily.<sup>1</sup> **It is important to talk to your family physician or pediatrician to get appropriate care.** A few things to consider include:

- All household members and other close contacts should be checked, and those with evidence of an active infestation should also be treated at the same time.<sup>2</sup>
- There are a number of available treatments, including new prescription treatment options that are safe and do not require combing out nits from your child's hair.
- Resistance to some over-the-counter head lice treatments has been reported. The prevalence of resistance is not known.<sup>3,4</sup>
- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.<sup>5</sup>
- Family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels should be washed in very hot water.<sup>2</sup>
- Personal articles such as combs, brushes and hair clips should also be washed in hot water if they are in contact with a person with head lice.<sup>2</sup>

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp. They feed on human blood. The eggs, also called nits, are tiny, tear-drop shaped eggs that attach to the hair shaft. They are often found around the nape of the neck or the ears. Nits may appear yellowish or white and can look similar to dandruff. But, unlike dandruff, they can be difficult to remove. Nymphs, or baby lice, are smaller and grow to adult size in one to two weeks. Adult lice are the size of a sesame seed and tan to grayish-white.<sup>1</sup>

If you or your family has to deal with this uncomfortable but common issue, keep in mind that head lice infestations are not related to cleanliness.<sup>6,7</sup> In fact, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits.<sup>7</sup> Infestations can occur at home, school or in the community. Head lice are mostly spread by **direct head-to-head contact, for an extended period of time (they don't jump or fly, they have to crawl out of one head and into another)**—for example, during slumber parties, sports activities, schools or camp. Less often, head lice are spread via objects that have been in recent contact with a person with head lice, such as hats, scarves, hair combs, brushes, etc.<sup>1,6</sup> Please remind your child not to share these items with others.

We are here to help you in any way we can. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can answer any questions or provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,

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## References

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  5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head lice: Treatment Frequently Asked Questions. [http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen\\_info/faqs\\_treat.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs_treat.html). Accessed April 15, 2015.
  6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Head lice: Epidemiology and Risk Factors. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/epi.html>. Accessed April 15, 2015.
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