

## **Helpful Tips for Screening and Treating for Lice**

Screening for and treating head lice can be frustrating, but with consistent at-home checks and timely treatment, we can work together to help minimize their spread in our school community.

**Here are the facts: head lice are crawling insects—they cannot jump, hop, or fly, and they do not live long away from the scalp. They are most often spread through close, prolonged head-to-head contact. Although transmission through shared personal items such as combs, hats, or sports helmets is possible, this is uncommon and not the primary way lice are spread.**

### **What You Can Do**

The best way to help prevent lice from spreading is to conduct regular lice checks at home, ideally on a weekly basis or as needed. A thorough check takes about 5–10 minutes per child.

### **What to Look For When Screening for Head Lice**

When checking your child for head lice, look closely at the scalp and hair, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Signs of lice may include frequent head scratching, scalp irritation, or the presence of small white or yellowish oval eggs (called nits) firmly attached to the hair shaft close to the scalp. Live lice are tiny, tan or gray insects that move quickly and can be difficult to see. Nits do not brush off like dandruff. If you find lice or nits, please begin treatment promptly.

### **Helpful Hints for a Thorough Lice Check:**

- Use a quality lice comb (e.g., [LiceMeister®1](#))
- Perform checks on wet hair, leaving a small amount of shampoo or conditioner in to make spotting lice easier—especially on darker hair.
- Begin at the nape of the neck, then check behind the ears, which are common sites for lice.
- Use a bright light (like a phone flashlight) and/or magnifying glass, if available.
- Place the comb at a downward angle close to the scalp and comb through to the end of the hair.
- Wipe the comb on a paper towel after each stroke and check for any lice or nits (eggs).
- Continue until you've checked the entire scalp.



**Image of nits (eggs)**



**Image of live louse**



## Department of Nursing Services

### When Lice Are Discovered at School

If lice are found during the school day, the school nurse will contact the parent/guardian, and you will be strongly encouraged to pick up your child and treat them using an over-the-counter lice product (see below) before their return.

### Helpful Hints for Effectively Treating Lice

Please treat your child before returning to school. Current medical guidance recommends the following:

1. **PYRETHRIN SHAMPOO:** Begin with an over-the-counter treatment (e.g., a shampoo product containing pyrethrins such as Nix or Rid). After shampooing the hair with the pyrethrin shampoo, use a fine-toothed lice comb to remove dead lice and nits from the hair. Most treatments require a second application 7–9 days later to kill any newly hatched lice. As a precaution, wash clothing, bedding, hats, and towels used within the previous 48 hours in hot water and dry on high heat. Items that cannot be washed may be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks. Extensive or repeated cleaning is not necessary. If lice persist after the second treatment with pyrethrins, contact your child’s health care provider or school nurse for guidance.
2. **OVIDE PRODUCT:** If lice persist after the use of pyrethrins, consider using a prescription treatment (e.g., Ovide). Specific brands of Ovides include Malathion (lotion), Spinosad (suspension), or Ivermectin (comes in both lotion and suspension). An ovicidal product is a lice treatment that helps kill nits in addition to the live lice. Because nits can survive some treatments and hatch days later, products that are ovicidal can reduce the chance of lice coming back. Even with ovicidal treatments, careful combing to remove nits and following treatment instructions, sometimes including a second treatment, are important for successful treatment.
3. **MECHANICAL REMOVAL: IF LICE STILL REMAIN AFTER TREATING WITH PYRETHRINS AND OVIDES, SWITCH TO MECHANICAL REMOVAL ONLY, AS REPEATED USE OF PESTICIDE TREATMENTS IS NOT RECOMMENDED AND MAY BE HARMFUL.**  
Be sure to reach out to your healthcare provider with any questions or concerns.
4. **HOME REMEDIES:** Alternatively, some families choose to use home remedies, such as botanical products (shampoos or sprays) intended to help repel lice (tea tree oil or citronella) or occlusive agents, which work by coating lice and nits, making it hard for them to breathe. To be effective, occlusive products typically need to remain on the hair and scalp for several hours (covered with a shower cap or Saran Wrap) before being washed out. Please note that these are considered alternative approaches that have been reported to help treat or prevent head lice; however, they are not FDA-approved and are not formally recommended as standard treatment.