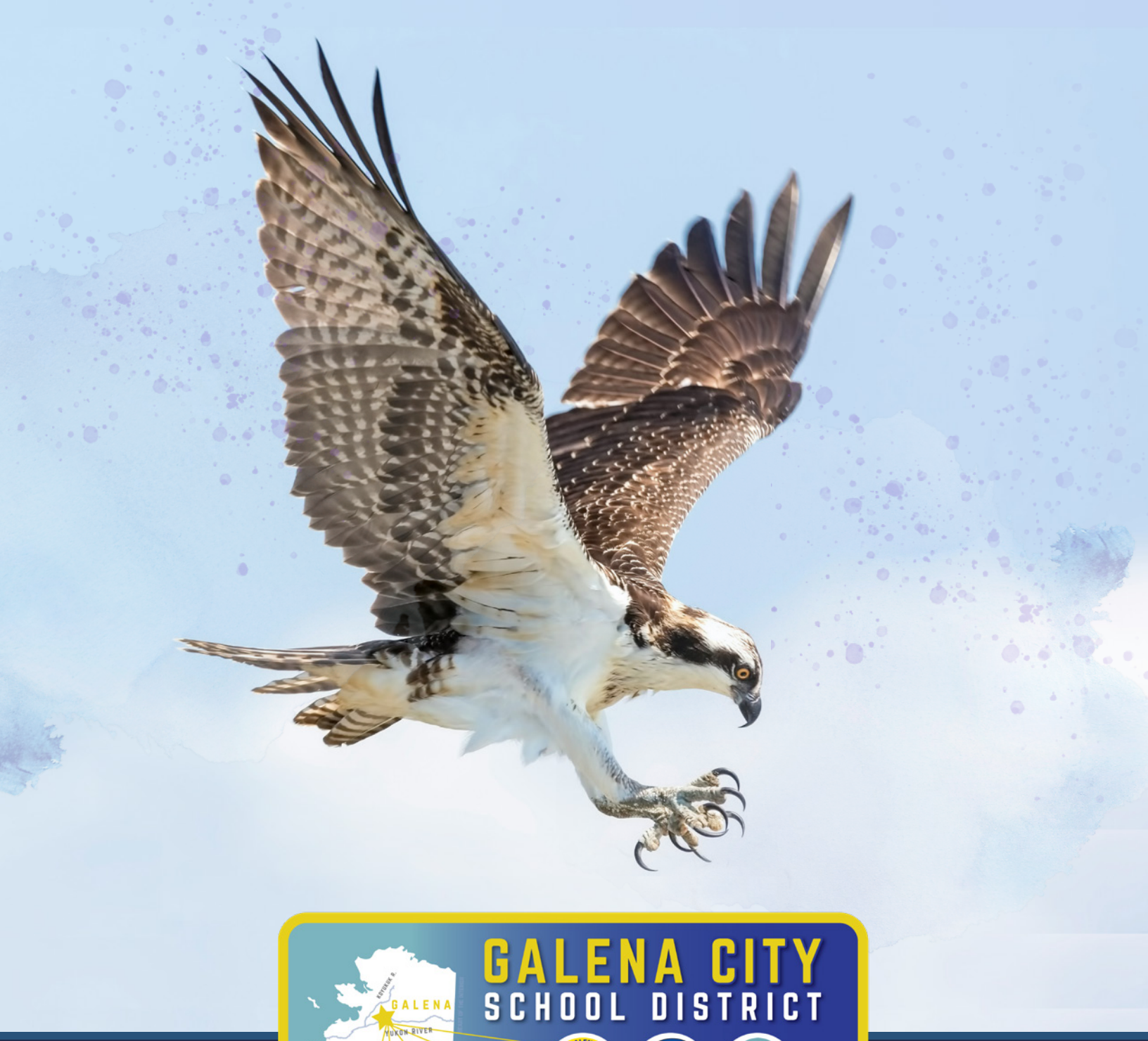

GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

SHS GILA IDEA

HEAD LICE PROTOCOL & GUIDELINES

DEVELOPED BY GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
SEPTEMBER 2024

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INTRODUCTION

Head lice are a fairly common problem in school age children. It is most prevalent among preschool and elementary school age children and their household members or caretakers. While head lice is a nuisance it does not pose a significant health hazard and is not known to spread disease. Head lice can be acquired anywhere in the community and may not be identified until weeks to months after exposure. Having head lice is not related to cleanliness of the person or their environment.

The most challenging aspect of head lice is not the condition itself but school staff and parent's reaction and emotions that occur when head lice is suspected. A lice infestation is made worse than it should be when parents, school and/or the community reacts with fear and anger, creating an environment of hysteria. This overreaction frequently creates anger directed towards parents and/or the school personnel and it often leads to teasing or alienation of the child, which can impact his or her self-esteem. Inappropriate management of head lice can also result in unnecessary absenteeism and may lead to improper treatment that could potentially be harmful.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that classroom or school-wide screening should be strongly discouraged due to the lack of evidence of efficacy and instead suggests that schools help educate parents in diagnosing and managing head lice.

If a child is assessed as having head lice, confidentiality must be maintained so the child is not embarrassed. The child's parent or guardian should be notified that day and educated on the prompt, proper treatment of head lice. The child should be allowed to return to school after proper treatment.

The information contained in this document was developed based on current research and knowledge obtained from guidelines set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Institutes of Health, and the National Association of School Nurses.

GALENA CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT HEAD LICE PROTOCOL

Galena City School District recommends a protocol that focuses on minimizing the impact on classrooms and providing parents with information for the necessary treatment of head lice.

- Any student with live lice or nits within ¼ inch of the scalp will be removed from the school setting (see Procedures). Immediate treatment at home is advised. The student will be readmitted to school after initial treatment and examination. If, upon examination, the school-designated personnel find no live lice or nits within ¼ inch of the scalp on the child, the child may reenter the school.
- Any student with nits more than a ¼ inch from the scalp or with nits that have been treated within the last two weeks should be allowed to stay in school.
- Parents should remove nits daily and treat lice per the instructions provided (see page 13) .

Head Lice Procedure

If a case of lice is suspected/found, the following procedures should be followed:

1. A trained designee from the school should check the child for head lice.
2. Once a case is confirmed, the school should call the parent and notify them of the head lice and the procedures to follow. It is preferable to have the parent/guardian pick up the child at school so information on procedures for treatment can be discussed. Immediate removal of the child is necessary for immediate treatment at home.
3. Send the letter, *"Lice Found on Child,"* home with the student. (Letter on page 13.)
4. The child with suspected head lice should be restricted from activities involving close contact (i.e. hugging) or sharing personal items (i.e. hats, clothing, brushes) with other children until treated.
5. If several cases of head lice occur in the same classroom the principal may choose to send a letter home notifying classmates' parents that a case of head lice is suspected and asking them to check all of their children for head lice. (See sample letter on page 14.)
6. All students in the classroom/grade should not be checked. Current evidence does not support the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of classroom or school-wide screening and can cause more harm than good given the psychological impact lice may have on a child.

Roles & Responsibilities

Parents have the ultimate responsibility for their children. This includes:

- Assisting in the prevention and management of head lice cases by regularly checking their children's hair and immediately treating when head lice is detected.

Schools have responsibility to:

- Designate individuals who will be responsible to check students who are suspected of having head lice.
- Verbally notify parent if their child has head lice.
- Send home lice-educational materials with the student.
- Examination of student for re-admittance following treatment.
- Cleaning the environment (See *"Information for Schools – Prevention and Control of Head Lice"* on page 8).
- Educate students on how to prevent transmission of head lice (See *"Information for Schools – Prevention and Control of Head Lice"* on page 8).
- Maintain the confidentiality of each student and treat each family with respect.

UNDERSTANDING HEAD LICE

What are Head Lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless, tan/brown insects that live and breed in human hair. They are about the size of a sesame seed. The eggs, called nits, are easier to see than the lice themselves. The nits are yellowish-white, tear-drop shaped, and are firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the neck. Dandruff, lint, and hair spray globules can easily be brushed from hair and can be mistaken for nits. Unlike dandruff, nits are difficult to remove and cannot be brushed away. Lice crawl slowly and cannot crawl long distances. They do not fly, hop, or jump. They survive by piercing the skin to feed on blood. Skin irritation at the feeding site causes itching. While head lice is a nuisance it does not pose a significant health hazard and they are not known to spread disease.

How Do Lice Spread?

Lice are primarily spread by direct hair-to-hair contact, and less frequently through shared items such as combs, brushes, scarves, hats, headphones, sleeping bags, and stuffed animals. Lice may also be transmitted through shared bedding such as pillows, pillowcases, sheets, and blankets. Lice cannot survive away from the head for more than 24-48 hours. However, the nits can survive off the body for a week or more but in order to survive they must get back on the head soon after they hatch. You cannot catch head lice from or give them to pets.

How Do You Prevent Head Lice?

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hats, and coats.
- Do not try on other people's hats (not even in department stores).
- Teach children to hang coats separately – placing hats and scarves inside coat sleeves.
- Check your child's hair if he/she itches or complains about itching.
- Getting rid of lice as soon as they are found can prevent them from spreading in your home.

How are Lice Detected ?

The first clue that a child has head lice is frequent scratching of the scalp. To check for infestation, carefully examine the hair around the back of the neck and behind the ears. Since head lice shy away from light, you may only see the eggs (nits), small whitish ovals of uniform size (teardrop shape) attached to the hair shaft.

How are Lice Treated?

Successful treatment needs to concentrate on removing/killing lice on the child and on the removal of the nits.

Several products are available to treat head lice. These are either shampoos or cream rinses. Some can be purchased over-the-counter while others need a prescription. These shampoos and rinses should not be used on infants because the medicine is absorbed through the skin and can affect the brain.

It is important to follow the instructions on the label exactly as they are written. Many of the treatments must be applied to dry hair to be effective. After the initial treatment, comb or pick out all the nits with a fine tooth nit comb. Combing should be repeated daily until no lice or nits are seen. A second treatment is recommended 7-10 days after the initial treatment. Only those family members with lice or nits should be treated.

Do not use a cream rinse, combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1-2 days after the lice medicine is removed.

How to Treat the Environment

In addition to treating those with lice, the home also needs to be addressed by:

- Checking everyone in the household at the same time, prior to cleaning the environment.
- Washing clothing and bed linens in hot water. Items should be washed for at least 10 minutes at a water temperature of 130-140°F. Dry items on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- Vacuuming your upholstered furniture, carpet, floors, stuffed animals, coat collars, hats, bare mattresses, car upholstery and child car seats. Soaking your combs, brushes, and hair accessories in boiling water for 10 minutes. If items cannot be exposed to heat, soak them in Lysol, rubbing alcohol or a pediculicide for one hour.
- Items that cannot be washed or vacuumed, such as stuffed animals, can be placed in a tightly closed plastic bag for 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures.
- All of the above tasks should be completed on the same day for increased success in eliminating head lice.

Spraying or fogging a home with insecticides or pediculicides is *NOT RECOMMENDED*, and may be harmful if used in a poorly ventilated area.

Prevention & Control of Head Lice

Tips for Preventing Transmission

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, coats, hats, caps, scarves, headsets, and any other personal headgear.
- Teach children to hang coats separately – placing hats and scarves inside coat sleeves.
- Shared headgear, helmets, and/or headphones should be cleaned and disinfected with Lysol or rubbing alcohol before being issued to other students.
- Pets in the classroom do not need to be treated and cannot carry or transmit head lice.
- Begin head lice education within the classrooms so that children can understand head lice and what they can do to help prevent the spread of lice.
- Watch for telltale scratching that might indicate head lice. If lice are suspected contact the office for child to be screened.
- Encourage parents to check their children regularly for head lice.

Tips for Cleaning the School Environment

- Vacuum all floors, rugs, pillows, carpet squares, and upholstered furniture.
- Play clothing, linens, smocks and cloth toys/ stuffed animals worn or handled by an infested individual within 2 days before diagnosis should be washed in water hotter than 130°F, or machine dried at the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes.
- Shared headgear, helmets, and/or headphones should be cleaned and disinfected with Lysol or rubbing alcohol before being issued to other students.
- Other items may be sealed in a plastic bag for 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures.
- It is not necessary to hire an exterminator.

Spraying or fogging schools with insecticides or pediculicides is *NOT RECOMMENDED*, and may be harmful if used in a poorly ventilated area or around student who may have a compromised respiratory system.

Head Lice Screening Procedure

Head lice screening requires the direct inspection of the hair and scalp for the presence of live lice and/or nits. It is not uncommon when screening for head lice to only see nits and not the actual live lice.

Supplies Needed:

- Disposable applicator sticks (long wooden Q-tips) or tongue depressors
- Trash can with garbage bags
- Transparent tape
- Gloves (optional)
- Chair
- Well lit private area
- Knowledge of *Galena City School District Head Lice Protocol & Procedures.*

What to look for:

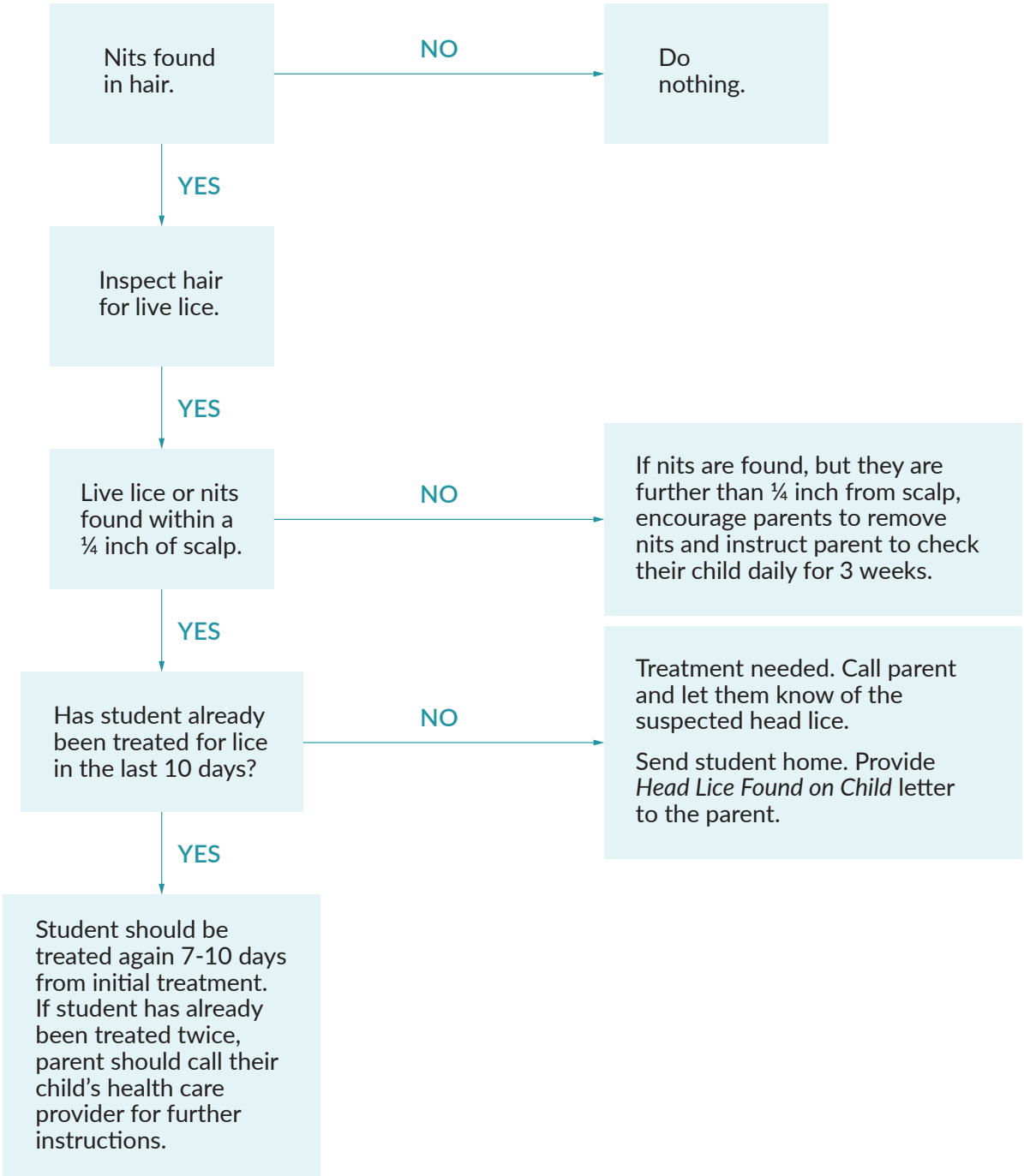
Live lice are the size of a sesame seed and are usually tan/brown in color. They move quickly away from the light. Lice do not fly, hop, or jump.

- Nits are easier to see than the lice themselves. The nits are yellowish-white, tear drop shaped, and are firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the neck.
- Dandruff, lint, and hair spray globules can easily be mistaken for nits. Unlike nits, which are firmly attached to the hair shaft, dandruff, lint, and hair spray globules can easily be brushed away.

Screening Procedure:

- Have student sit in a chair in a well-lit area.
- Begin by separating the hair into small sections using tongue blade or applicator stick. Although there is little chance of contracting head lice by screening, non-latex surgical gloves may be used if desired.
- Examine the head, paying special attention to the areas behind the ears, back of neck, and scalp, for lice or nits.
- If a louse is found, use transparent tape to remove louse. This can then be shown to parent to confirm that a live louse was found.
- If nits are suspected be sure to make sure it is not dandruff, lint, or hair spray globules. Dandruff, lint, or hair spray globules can be easily removed from the hair by blowing, rubbing or brushing; nits won't budge unless "picked" or removed with a fine-tooth-comb.
- If live lice or nits are found, follow *Galena City School District Head Lice Protocol & Procedures.*

School Flow Chart for Managing Head Lice Infestations



INFORMATION FOR SCHOOLS

Sample Newsletter Article

Parents, your importance in the control of head lice is crucial in preventing outbreaks in the school setting. Head lice are easily acquired in the community and are usually not identifiable for weeks to months after exposure. Having head lice will not lead to any other disease, nor does it mean your child is dirty. This condition, though troublesome, should not be the basis of irrational or unkind reactions.

You can help by understanding what head lice are, how you get it, how to prevent it, how to detect it, and how to treat it.

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless, tan/brown insects that live and breed in human hair. They are about the size of a sesame seed. The eggs, called nits, are easier to see than the lice themselves. The nits are yellowish-white, tear drop shaped, and are firmly attached, at an angle to the hair shaft close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the neck. Dandruff, lint, and hair spray globules can easily be brushed from hair and can be mistaken for nits. Unlike dandruff, nits are difficult to remove and cannot be brushed away. Lice crawl slowly and cannot crawl long distances. They do not fly, hop, or jump. They survive by piercing the skin to feed on blood. Skin irritation at the feeding site causes itching. While head lice is a nuisance it does not pose a significant health hazard and they are not known to spread disease.

How do lice spread?

Lice are primarily spread by direct hair-to-hair contact, and less frequently through shared items such as combs, brushes, scarves, hats, headphones, sleeping bags, and stuffed animals. Lice may also be transmitted through shared bedding such as pillows, pillowcases, sheets, and blankets. Lice cannot survive away from the head for more than 24-48 hours. However, the nits can survive off the body for a week or more but in order to survive they must get back on the head soon after they hatch. You cannot catch head lice from or give them to pets.

How do you prevent head lice?

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hats, and coats.
- Do not try on other people's hats (not even in department stores).
- Teach children to hang coats separately – placing hats and scarves inside of coat. Check your child's hair if he/she frequently scratches their head or complains about itching.
- Getting rid of lice as soon as they are found can prevent them from spreading in your home.

How are lice detected?

The first clue that a child has head lice is frequent scratching of the scalp. To check for infestation, carefully examine the hair around the back of the neck and behind the ears. Since head lice shy away from light, you may only see the eggs (nits), small whitish ovals of uniform size (teardrop shape) attached to the hair shaft.

How are lice treated?

Successful treatment needs to concentrate on removing/killing lice on the child and on the removal of the nits.

Several products are available to treat head lice. These are either shampoos or cream rinses. Some can be purchased over-the-counter while others need a prescription. These medicated shampoos and rinses should not be used on infants because the medicine is absorbed through the skin and can affect the brain.

It is important to follow the instructions on the medicine exactly. Many of the treatments must be applied to dry hair to be effective. After the initial treatment, comb or pick out all the nits with a fine tooth nit comb. Combing should be repeated daily until no lice or nits are seen. A second treatment is recommended 7-10 days after the initial treatment. Only those family members with lice or nits should be treated.

Do not use a cream rinse, combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1-2 days after the lice medicine is removed.

How to treat the environment

In addition to treating those with lice, the home also needs to be addressed by:

- Checking everyone in the household at the same time, prior to cleaning the environment.
- Washing clothing and bed linens in hot water. Items should be washed for at least 10 minutes at a water temperature of 130-140°F. Dry items on high heat for at least 30 minutes.
- Vacuuming your upholstered furniture, carpet, floors, stuffed animals, coat collars, hats, bare mattresses, car upholstery and child car seats. Soaking your combs, brushes, and hair accessories in boiling water for 10 minutes. If items cannot be exposed to heat, soak them in Lysol, rubbing alcohol or a pediculicide for one hour.
- Items that cannot be washed or vacuumed, such as stuffed animals, can be placed in a tightly closed plastic bag for 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures.
- All of the above tasks should be completed on the same day for increased success in eliminating head lice.

Spraying or fogging a home with insecticides or pediculicides is *NOT RECOMMENDED*, and may be harmful if used in a poorly ventilated area.

Letter to Parent – Head Lice Found on Child

Date

Dear Parent or Guardian of _____

Head lice or nits within ¼ inch from the scalp (eggs) have been found on your child's head. Head lice have nothing to do with the cleanliness of a house or parenting skills. Head lice are easily acquired in the community and are usually not identifiable for weeks to months after exposure. They are spread by hair-to-hair contact, although sharing hats, combs, and other hair accessories may also spread head lice. Head lice crawl but they **cannot** jump or fly. Head lice are not a risk to pets.

It is important to treat your child before he/she returns to school. Please begin treatment as soon as possible. Your child should be back to school the following day so that they do not miss learning opportunities in the classroom. Also, remember to check everyone in the household and treat anyone that has live head lice and/or nits. Continuous checking maybe required up to 3 weeks to avoid re-infestation.

How to Treat Head Lice

Head lice may be treated with shampoos intended for the treatment of head lice. Use lice shampoo exactly as directed on the label. Many of these shampoos are insecticides and should be used with caution, especially on children and by pregnant or nursing women. If your child has asthma please consult with his/her health care provider. It is important that you read and follow the shampoo directions as some require application on wet hair and some require application on dry hair. In addition, some lice shampoos require a second shampooing 10 days later to kill lice that may have hatched after the initial treatment. **Do not over-treat.** In some cases the over-the-counter products fail to kill the live lice. If this occurs please contact your health care provider, as they may be able to order a prescription medication for treatment of head lice.

Removal of Head Lice and Nits

Effective treatment of head lice requires the removal of both lice and eggs from the hair. Lice shampoos do not remove eggs from the hair. The eggs must be combed out or manually removed from the hair. Sit behind your child in a room with good lighting to comb through the hair, one section at a time. Use a fine-toothed nit comb. These combs are sold at most stores or may be included in packages of the lice shampoo. Combs with metal teeth spaced close together work best. Your child's hair should be clean, wet, well combed or brushed to remove tangles before using the louse comb. A conditioner may be used to lubricate the hair. Divide hair into small sections. Comb through each section until no more lice or eggs are found. Clean the comb with a paper towel to remove any eggs or lice. You should continue checking and removing any lice or eggs for a period of 3 weeks.

Treating the Environment

In addition to treating those with lice, the home also needs to be addressed. All items your child has been in contact with in the past two days such as towels, pillowcases, sheets, pajamas, clothes, coats, hats, and similar items should be washed in water temperature of 130°-140°F and dried on high heat for at least 30 minutes. Items that cannot be washed or vacuumed, such as stuffed animals, can be placed in a tightly closed plastic bag for 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures. Lice in the environment (not on the head) usually die within a day and the eggs generally cannot live much longer.

Vacuum the house, mattresses, furniture, car upholstery, and child car seats. Using household insecticides to treat the home, vehicles, carpets or furniture **is not recommended** and may unnecessarily expose your household to harmful chemicals.

Sincerely,

Letter to Parent – Several Cases of Head Lice Found In the School

Dear Parent/Guardian:

A case of head lice has been found in your child's class. The parents of all students in the class are being notified via this letter. Head lice are easily acquired in the community and are usually not identifiable for weeks to months after exposure.

This is not cause for panic. It is cause for action to be taken to prevent head lice. Treat/remove any head lice or nits found on your child's head.

It is extremely important for you to check your child's head TODAY. Keep checking every 2 days for 10 days to make sure no head lice are found.

The best way to prevent transmission:

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, scarves, headsets, or any other personal headgear.
- Do not try on other people's hats (even at department stores).
- Teach children to hang coats separately-placing hats and scarves inside coat/jacket sleeves.
- Conduct regular checks of your child.

If head lice/nits are found on your child:

- Check others in the household for signs of head lice or nits. If found, complete remaining steps on all infested individuals.
- Use an effective head lice treatment.
- Remove nits from the head by combing. This is the most important lice control measure. Complete nit removal is time consuming but is critical for successful treatment.
- Remove all of the lice and nits from the environment by washing or vacuuming. There is not need to spray pesticides at home as they may unnecessarily expose your household to harmful chemicals.
- Perform daily head checks and remove nits for 3 weeks until head lice are gone. Continue to check your child weekly to detect re---infestation.

If you have difficulty getting rid of the head lice on your child, please contact your child's health care provider.

Sincerely,

Dear Parent/Guardian

We are sending this letter to all parents to increase head lice awareness so that you may take steps at home to help prevent your child from becoming infested with head lice. Any time children come together, particularly at the start of the school year, or any social grouping, head lice cases commonly increase. Please encourage your child not to share or trade personal items such as hats, combs, brushes, headbands, clips, as well as helmets or headphones with foam protectors.

Direct, physical, hair-to-hair contact is the usual method of transmission. Lice do not jump, fly or swim. They are, however, good crawlers. Check your child's head weekly for lice and/or nits (eggs). Mature lice, which are the size of a sesame seed, avoid light and are hard to see. Lice eggs or "nits" are usually found close to the scalp-usually within ¼ inch. The nits are yellowish-white, tear drop shaped, and are firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the neck. They cannot easily be flicked away as dandruff can. Head lice do not transmit disease and are not a serious medical condition. They cannot survive on pets. If you find head lice on your child keep him or her home until properly treated. This should be no longer than 24 hours. Continue to examine all family members for 3 weeks and treat if live lice or nits close to the scalp are found.

CHECK REGULARLY – TREAT QUICKLY
Keep Head Lice Off Your Child.

For more information regarding head lice please feel free to contact the school office or the local clinic.

Thank you for your help and support.

Sincerely,

10 DAYS TO FREEDOM FROM HEAD LICE

Day 1	Notify or check all exposed friends and family members.	Treat only those who are infested with live lice or have evidence of nits.	Wash all bedding, clothing, and toys in hot water (130° F) and dry on high heat for 30 minutes. Items that cannot be washed should be stored in a tightly sealed garbage bag for 2 weeks or placed in a freezer for 24 hours.	Vacuum all carpeting, furniture and car upholstery.
Day 2	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	
Day 3	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	
Day 4	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	
Day 5	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	
Day 6	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	
Day 7	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions.	
Day 8	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions unless this was done on day 7.
Day 9	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions unless this was done on day 7 or 8.
Day 10	Vacuum.	Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.	Comb/pick nits out of hair.	If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions unless this was done on day 7, 8 or 9.

HEAD LICE PROTOCOL & GUIDELINES