

Dear Parents/Guardians:

When there is a case of head lice reported in your student's classroom. These lice could have come from almost anywhere, i.e. a classmate, an upholstered seat in a movie theater, an after school club/activity, a sporting event/practice, or a friend's house. If every parent will take the responsibility to check the entire family often, this nuisance can be controlled. Lice outbreaks are common among school children and even the cleanest child can easily become infested.

Please consider taking time during the next **two weeks** to daily check your child's head for evidence of lice. If head lice (live bugs) or nits (eggs) are found near the scalp, contact your school nurse, physician or pharmacist. A special shampoo or crème rinse will be recommended. Begin removing the nits (eggs) from the hair shaft and contact the school nurse. Only by removing **all eggs** from the hair will reinfestation be avoided, even after treatment with the medicated shampoo!! It is crucial that all treatment and cleaning procedures are done and follow up is completed.

The following information may help in performing a screening at home:

What to look for: Lice are small, flat wingless insects about an eighth of an inch long. They cannot jump or fly. They are usually light brown or grey, but can vary in color. They move quickly and shy away from light, making them difficult to see. Diagnosis is more often made on the basis of finding nits (eggs). Head lice should be suspected when there is intense itching and scratching of the scalp at the hair shaft, especially at the nape of the neck and above the ears. Nits are cemented to the hair shaft and unlike dandruff will not wash off or blow away. It helps to use a magnifying glass and natural light when looking for them.

In addition to using a special shampoo if your child has lice:

- ⇒ Clean **all** personal clothing and bedding of your child and any other infested family members in very hot water.
- ⇒ Non-washable items may be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- ⇒ Vacuum carpets, upholstery, pillows and mattresses which may have been exposed to person with head lice.

Returning to school: Your child may return to school after being treated with a lice product and most all of the nits (eggs) have been removed. Before returning to the classroom your child will need to be examined by the school nurse or office staff to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.

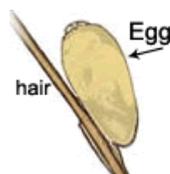
Thank you for your help! Julie A. Garner RN BSN

For more information on head lice:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/factsheet.html>
- http://kidshealth.org/parent/infections/common/head_lice.html
- <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000840.htm>



***Actual size of 3 lice forms compared to a penny



(Egg on hair shaft)



(Nymph form)



How did my child get head lice?

Head-to-head contact with an already infested person is the most common way to get head lice. Head-to-head contact is common during play at school, at home, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camps).

Although uncommon, head lice can be spread by sharing clothing or belongings. This happens when lice crawl, or nits attached to shed hair hatch, and get on the shared clothing or belongings. Examples include:

- sharing clothing (hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms) or articles (hair ribbons, barrettes, combs, brushes,
- towels, stuffed animals) recently worn or used by an infested person;
- or lying on a bed, couch, pillow, or carpet that has recently been in contact with an infested person. Dogs, cats, and other pets do not play a role in the spread of head lice.

Prevention & Control

Head lice are spread most commonly by direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. However, much less frequently they are spread by sharing clothing or belongings onto which lice have crawled or nits attached to shed hairs may have fallen. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1-2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the scalp.

The following are steps that can be taken to help prevent and control the spread of head lice:

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camp).
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes.
- Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfest combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid reinfestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

To help control a head lice outbreak in a community, school, or camp, children can be taught to avoid activities that may spread head lice.

Please take the time for the next 2 weeks and check your child's head every night to identify if an outbreak is occurring at your home. **IT TAKES REMOVING ALL NITS TO ENSURE THERE IS NO FURTHER OUTBREAKS FOR YOUR STUDENT. We see repeated outbreaks with the same students due to lack of nit removal from the hair. Products are fine to utilize but in reality if you remove all nits from the hair, you are guaranteeing no further live lice will hatch!!! At school we can monitor progress but combing is done at home because it takes hours and days to complete the job.**

There is quite a bit of cleaning and washing to do in order to prevent further infestations. It is not simply done after the medicated shampoo is used. You must follow up with combing every nit out of the hair until the follow up treatment is recommended. The nits, or eggs, will not "fall" off of the hair shaft; they must be combed out with a "nit comb". Combing takes time over several weeks to ensure that all of the nits are removed. Vacuuming must be done especially on couches and carpets where lice may have crawled onto. These lice can live up to 48 hours off of the body until a new head is found! All bedding and clothing is to be washed on a high heat cycle and completely dried on high. This includes hats, coats, scarves, and hair accessories. Any item that cannot be washed or dry cleaned needs to be put in a plastic bag for 2 weeks, no less.

If you suspect a lice outbreak at your home please do not hesitate to notify the health office. We are here to help as needed. If you have treated your child for lice please notify us for a head check before the student returns to school. Do not forget to notify close contacts so they can monitor for lice too. The Health Office is also here to assist in notifying close contacts if needed.

Please communicate with your child that we do not share coats, hats or hair accessories at school. Eliminating "head to head" contact will prevent the spread of lice!! Teachers have also been educating students about how to protect themselves. Girls with long hair are advised to pull their hair back into a pony tail to minimize exposure.

Products for treatment, including a nit comb (metal is best!), can be found at local pharmacies and use the pharmacist for questions...they are a great resource!