

Head Lice

Head lice are ever present in our environment. Parents should check their student's head frequently for evidence of infestations. Head lice carry no disease nor do they cause "Illness", but they are uncomfortable nuisances.

Lice are transmitted from one child to another, most commonly through the sharing of combs, brushes, hats and jackets, and activities that require heads to be touching one another. Lice infestation may occur in any social or economic group in spite of frequent shampooing.

Simple precautions to prevent spread of head lice:

1. Provide each of your children with his/her own comb or brush and ask him/her NOT to share it.
2. Be particular with whom your child shares a baseball cap, batting helmet, swim cap, sweat band, scarf, windbreaker, or jacket, etc.
3. **Be** aware that slumber parties, camp-outs, movies, skating rinks, swimming pools - any area where people congregate - can be potential sources of a lice infestation.
4. Check your children's heads weekly or after shampooing. Lice, eggs or nits are white deposits on the hair near the scalp that look like dandruff but don't pull off the hair easily as dandruff does. If you find lice or nits, NOTIFY THE SCHOOL OFFICE.

Identification:

Adult head lice are elongated insects about this (--) long and are grayish-white with dark margins. Lice cannot fly or jump, but they do move very quickly, making them difficult to find in a child's hair.

Nits are lice eggs and appear as tiny white globules that adhere to the hair shaft usually near the scalp. Nits are teardrop in shape, about this size (,) and vary in color from yellowish – brown to white. On the hair shaft, they resemble dandruff, but cannot be easily brushed off. Itching and scratching of the scalp are usually present.

Transmission:

Lice are transferred directly by contact with an affected person. They are indirectly transmitted by contact with infested personal belongings such as clothing, headgear, combs, brushes and bedding. They can be transmitted as long as lice and nits are alive.

Prevention Tips:

- Discourage the use of combs, brushes or other grooming aids belonging to other persons.
- Stress that individuals should not share caps, other headgear, or clothing, especially coats or sweaters.
- Encourage good personal hygiene practices.
- Check the entire family regularly if you suspect head lice.

Treatment:

- **Notify the School Nurse if lice or nits are found.** Keep your child home from school until treated and inform the school office when he/she is returning.
- All family members should be examined and treated as necessary.
- Consult your physician or pharmacist for the most effective treatment. Regular shampoos are not effective in killing lice and nits.

- Shampoo hair according to directions. A vinegar rinse may help to remove the nits more easily with a fine toothcomb or with fingers. Repeat treatment as recommended in 7-10 days.
- Wash bedding, clothing and other personal items in hot, soapy water or dry clean. Dryers should be used if available. Articles that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned may be sealed in a plastic bag for 30 to 35 days (i.e., stuffed animals and toys).
- Thoroughly vacuum mattresses, upholstered furniture and rugs. Wash wood or metal furniture with soap and water. Lice sprays are costly and their effectiveness is questionable.
- Dogs and other pets do not become infested themselves but they could possibly be carriers.