

HEAD LICE PROTOCOL

Head lice occurrence is a very common community problem and it occurs when children come together and are in close contact. Head lice are spread through head-to-head contact and sharing of combs, brushes, and clothing (hats, headbands, coats, etc.). We are always on the lookout in hopes of stopping them before they have a chance to spread. You can help by frequently examining your child's head and letting us know immediately if head lice are discovered. We will then check the students in the necessary classrooms to try to stop them before they spread further and maybe cause a re-infestation in your family. It is extremely upsetting for parents to send their children back to school lice-free only to have them get them again from a playmate. So please let us know so we can perform the appropriate head checks.

The following procedure will be followed:

1) Anyone discovered to have live head lice and/or a large number of nits will be sent home. A list of instructions for treatment will be given to the parents.

2) After following the treatment steps and you think your child is ready to return to school, the parent must call the District Office (935-2600 Ext. 12) and set up an appointment with the School Nurse to have their child's hair rechecked. These appointments can be scheduled for 8am at the District Office unless you are advised differently. Children will not be allowed back into the school until they have been properly treated.

Extra Note: If your child should be sent home with head lice, please don't panic. Head lice are pests but are not harmful and ANYONE can get them. The old stigma that only unclean people contract lice does not apply to head lice. Millions of people in the United States get them each year and the numbers have been increasing.

We need your assistance in preventing the spread of head lice. You can help by:

- 1) Checking your child for head lice (head scratching is the first sign of head lice).
- 2) Notifying parents who your child plays with, has after school activities with, has youth group with, etc., so they can check and treat their children if necessary.
- 3) Notifying your day care center, babysitter, etc.
- 4) Notifying your child's school so we can check your child's classmates.

Extra Note: We will be keeping you informed by sending home information about head lice occurrence throughout the year. The children will also be learning about lice and we will be encouraging preventive practices. Getting this nationwide problem out in the open, and all of us working together with accurate information will help get rid of these troublesome little insects that upset so many families and schools every year.

INFORMATION AND FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE:

Examining for Head Lice:

Itching and scratching are indications that lice may be present on your child's head. However, it is important to periodically check heads for lice and their nits even if there are no symptoms. The more quickly they are found, the easier it is to prevent spreading, keep them under control, and eliminate them. Lice live on the scalp and lay nits (eggs) on the hair shaft close to the scalp.

Examination of the head is best under the natural light found near a window. Part the hair at the roots with your fingers. Look for small red bite or scratch marks on the scalp or neck along with the lice and their eggs. Lice can move quite rapidly, are sensitive to light, extremely small, and tend to copy the color of the hair. All of these reasons make the louse difficult to find although it becomes easier with practice. A magnifying glass may help the inexperienced. The louse is almost see-through and extremely small. They range in size from ■ to ■. They are wingless, flat, oval insects with a hook-like claw at the end of each of their legs. As the louse grows, it tends to resemble the honey-color to gray to reddish-brown. Dark reddish-brown is their usual color after eating their blood meal.

The nits may be easier to find. They can look like dandruff but are cemented to a strand of hair and will not move, slide, brush, or fall off. In fact, the only way to get them off is with your fingernails or a specially designed comb that can be purchased at a drug store (metal combs are the best). The nits are tiny egg-shaped specks that are yellowish-white. They are usually found near the scalp behind the ears and around the nape of the neck.

Facts about Head Lice:

- 1) It takes about one week for a nit to hatch; after the nit hatches, it takes about three weeks for the nymph to become an adult; the adult louse lives for about one month; The adult female louse lays 50-150 nits in one month.
- 2) Itchiness is caused by nymphs as well as adults, breaking the skin with piercing and sucking mouth parts and injecting saliva to keep blood from clotting so they can begin feeding.
- 3) Lice do not fly, hop or jump. They hang on to hair or fibers and transfer from person to person by crawling. It is difficult for them to walk on a smooth surface.
- 4) Lice do not carry disease.
- 5) A person is infested when:
 - a. Nits are found firmly attached to the hair shaft near the scalp (less than 1/4" from the scalp).
 - b. Live lice are found.
- 6) Removing all nits from the hair, after doing the head lice shampoo, is an extremely important step to complete in order to get rid of head lice.
- 8) Head lice live and breed ONLY on humans (not pets).
- 9) Having head lice on your person does not reflect your life style. They do not care whose head they are on.

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Treatment of Head Lice:

- 1) Regular shampoo will NOT get rid of head lice. Lice medicated shampoo must be used by **ALL** members of the family to get rid of head lice. Directions should be followed carefully since these products are pesticides. **APPLY THE LICE SHAMPOO TO A DRY HEAD OF HAIR SO THE LICE DON'T HAVE A CHANCE TO CLOSE THEIR BREATHING HOLES.** If you wet the hair first, the lice will close these holes and the shampoo won't be able to enter into and kill the lice. No lice shampoo kills the nits. Nits must be picked or combed out so no new nymphs can hatch to start their cycle again. Combing out the nits following the treatment shampoo is a very important step.
- 2) The initial shampoo kills the lice. **Lice are not killed instantly.** It may take up to 25 minutes.
- 3) The second shampoo, which should be done in 7 days, kills any new young lice that hatched from a nit missed in the initial removal process but before they are old enough to lay nits.
- 4) Further treatment includes:
 - a. Washing bedding and clothing in the hottest water (135F) for five to ten minutes. Dry in clothes dryer for 20 minutes. Clothes or stuffed animals that can't be washed should be sealed in a plastic bag for 30 days.
 - b. Thoroughly vacuum carpets, furniture, the backs of the seats in the car, and bike, snowmobile or sport helmets. **Remember, always throw out the vacuum cleaner bag after use. Fumigation is no more effective in controlling head lice than vacuuming and increases the potential for needless insecticide exposure; It is also a costly practice.**
 - c. **Soak brushes and combs** in a solution of lice-medicated shampoo for one hour or boil in water for ten minutes at 150F.
 - d. Items to remember to clean — headbands, barrettes, hair ornaments, mattress, pillows, towels, hats, coats, scarves, earmuffs, gloves, baseball caps and hair rollers.

Preventive Measure to Teach to Decrease Incidences of Head Lice:

- 1) **Discourage** your child from
 - exchanging clothes and personal items (combs, brushes, hats, headbands, etc.)
 - piling their coats and sweaters on top of each other on the playground, etc. -
 - placing their head on carpeting or cushions, etc.
- 2) **Encourage** your child to:
 - hang up their jackets, sweaters and hats so that they are not touching others.
 - prevent head-to-head contact
 - keep their own "space."

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Manual Removal of Head Lice and Nits:

- 1) After shampooing with a lice shampoo and while the hair is still damp, comb out tangles with your regular comb. Divide the hair in sections and fasten off the hair that is not being worked on at this time.
- 2). Using a fine-toothed comb, go through the section from the scalp to the end of the hair. Dip the comb into a cup of water or use a paper towel to remove any lice, nits, or debris from the comb between each passing.
- 3) Sift through that same section of hair and look for attached nits. They are oval-shaped, usually grayish-white, although they can vary in color. Nits are generally laid close to the scalp but can be found anywhere on the hair shaft. They attach to a hair shaft by a cement-like substance secreted by the louse and are extremely difficult to remove, unlike hair casts or external debris that can wash or fall off easily.
- 4) If a fine-toothed comb does not remove the nits, then use your fingernails or safety scissors to snip the individual hair strands with attached nits.
- 5) After the screening and nit removal have been completed, it is easiest to search for live lice using more than one person. Lice move quickly away from light but can be caught by tweezers, fingernails, or double-sided scotch tape. Lice are usually pale gray or brown in color, 1-3mm in size and have been compared to a sesame seed in appearance.
- 6) Seeing a nit or two the next day does not necessarily indicate re-infestation. If additional nits (at least 3-5 per day) are discovered, this can indicate live lice may still be on the head. Another thorough manual search is recommended at this time.