

## INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head lice is as easily treated condition and is not a serious medical problem. The following information will tell you about head lice and what you can do to help get rid of it.

Head lice are spread through close personal contact with another infested person. Spreading can occur by sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, caps, wigs, coats. A common source is sharing helmets, caps, etc. by sports teams. Cleanliness has nothing to do with getting head lice. Frequent bathing will neither prevent nor get rid of an infestation once it occurs.

Head lice are insects about this (--) long and are grayish-white with dark margins. LICE DO NOT JUMP, FLY, OR STAY ALIVE LONG PERIODS OFF THE HUMAN HEAD. Because head lice are good at hiding in the hair, an infestation is usually only diagnosed by finding nits. A nit is a louse egg. Nits are teardrop-shaped, about the size of a typewritten comma (,), and vary from yellowish-brown to white. Head lice attach each nit to a hair shaft with a waterproof, cement-like substance. Thus, nits cannot be washed out or brushed out of the hair like dandruff or other debris that may look like nits to the naked eye. Clusters of nits may be found in any section of the hair, but are commonly found on hairs at the back of the neck and behind the ears where they are protected from extreme light and temperature. The entire head should be examined.

It is necessary to treat the individual with active infestation and all family members (ASK YOUR DOCTOR BEFORE TREATING ANY CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF 2). Personal articles that the child and any infested contacts have worn or used within the past two days should be cleaned. The following treatment procedure should be carried out before your child returns to school.

- 1) Obtain head louse shampoo from your pharmacy or private physician. Apply according to manufacturer's instructions. These treatments are medicines and should not be used more frequently than label directions suggest nor used to PREVENT an infestation for which it is not intended.
- 2) Have your child put on clean clothing after the treatment.
- 3) Remove nits (eggs). Wiping down the hair shaft with warm vinegar on a piece of cotton will help loosen the nits. A fine tooth comb can be used. Using a good light, carefully go over the hair, strand by strand picking the nits out by hand and disposing of them in a closed paper bag.
- 4) Students will be allowed to return to class once treatment has occurred but must be checked by the school nurse or designated personnel prior to riding the bus or attending class to assure active infestation has been treated.
- 5) Repeat treatment with the louse shampoo according to the manufacturer's recommendations, usually 7 – 10 days.

Since heat kills lice and their eggs, many personal items can be disinfested by machine washing in Hot water and/or drying using the HOT cycle of the dryer. Personal articles of clothing, back packs, and stuffed toys that cannot be washed or dried may be dry cleaned or simply placed in a plastic bag and sealed for 10 days. Combs, brushes and similar items can be disinfested by soaking them in one of the pediculicide shampoos for 1 hour or by soaking them for 5 – 10 minutes in a pan of water heated on the stove to about 150 degrees. Carpets, furniture and inside the car, etc. do not require special treatment as lice live only a short time away from the head. Simply vacuuming thoroughly is sufficient..USE OF INSECTICIDES OR FUMIGATION IS NOT NECESSARY.

Parents of your child's closest friends should be notified that their child may also be infested. This is particularly important if the children have slept together, shared combs, or hair items, had frequent body contact, or shared helmets. If the friend becomes infested while playing with your child and is not treated, your child may become reinfested from his friend.

Students with long hair are encouraged to wear it up and back during school hour to make it less likely to come into contact with lice.

If you have a question or need assistance, please contact the school nurse. By working together we can help prevent head lice from becoming a major problem.