

HEAD LICE ALERT!



Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child may have recently been exposed to head lice. It is important for parent(s) to be checking your student's head for head lice, as part of their daily routine. Head lice can be a wide spread community nuisance. The purpose of this letter is to help you identify, treat, and control the spread of lice.

Facts About Head Lice

Lice are insects that lay tiny oval whitish colored eggs called nits on the hair strand near the scalp and behind the ears. The eggs are attached to the hair strand by a glue-like substance. Nits look like dandruff but unlike dandruff, which can be flaked off the hair, nits can only be pulled off with force. Lice are spread from direct head-to-head contact, and indirectly by sharing personal belongings. Head lice are commonly spread within households. They do not fly or jump from one person to another.

The most common sign of lice are nits on the hair strand. Symptoms of lice also include itching, rash and/or scratch marks close to the hairline and the base of the neck.

What Can Parents Do?

- **Check** your child's hair **daily**. Work in bright light with a comb, parting the hair in one-inch sections for best results. You will usually find the live lice close to the scalp. Behind the ears and at the base of the neck are favorite hiding places. Look closely. They are sometimes hard to spot.
- Instruct your child to avoid touching the heads of playmates (hugging, putting their heads together etc.) and not to share hats, combs brushes or clothing. **No direct head-to-head contact.**
- Instruct your child not to put his/her head on the rug or to roll around on rugs.
- During the winter, tell your child to put his/her hat in the sleeve of the coat.

What if you find lice on your child?

- Go to a pharmacy for an over the counter lice shampoo, lotion or cream, also known as pediculicides. Follow the instructions on the label exactly. Your school nurse can help with diagnosis and suggestions about treatment.
- If you do not wish to use a pediculicide you must manually remove all live bugs and nits.
- Buy a metal lice comb (**Lice Meister comb works best**) since it works better than plastic ones. Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 5 minutes. (128.3 F/53.5C)
- Vacuum all rugs and furniture, which have been used by your child in the 2-3 days prior.
- Wash all linens and bedclothes that have been used in hot soapy water and dry in hot dryer. Dry cleaning also works well. If neither washing nor dry cleaning is possible put the clothes in a large plastic bag and leave sealed for a week or so before using.
- Check the heads of all family members and treat only those heads on which live lice or untreated nits are found. Before treating children younger than 2 years old or pregnant women, consult their physicians.
- Inform the mother of your child's best friend. If that child is infested and they are not both treated at the same time recurrent infection can occur.
- Inform the nurse in the school clinic if a case is found at home. She will also give you further instructions and will check your child's head when he/she returns to school after treatment.
- No healthy child should be excluded from or miss school because of head lice.
- Manual nit removal is the most effective way to get rid of nits.