

Dear Parents & Guardians,

With the start of school comes the potential risk of an infestation of head lice. You and your child can have good personal hygiene habits and still get lice. Today, kids can be placed into two groups: Those with head lice and those at risk for getting head lice. And head lice will spread as long as children play together. With that in mind, I'd like to share some important information with you.

Parents and guardians are the key to the control and prevention of head lice infestation.

Please spend 15 minutes each week on each child in the home, carefully looking for head lice or nits. Though very small, head lice can be seen by the human eye. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed and are usually pale gray. They live in human hair, draw blood from the skin, and lay eggs (called nits) on the hair shaft. The nits (about the size of a knot in thread) may be found **cemented onto the hair shaft**, less than ½ inch from the scalp, and most often on hair at the back of the head in the neck region and over the ears. Children may complain of “feeling something crawling in their hair”, or complain of an itchy head. The gold standard for diagnosing head lice is finding a live louse on the head, although it may be easier to spot the nits. It is important not to confuse nits with dandruff, hair casts, or other hair debris.

Lice cannot hop or fly; they crawl. Transmission in most cases occurs by direct contact with the head of another infested individual. Indirect spread through contact with personal belongings such as combs, brushes, and hats is much less likely, but cannot be excluded. Therefore, it's recommended to give each child his or her own comb or brush. Teach your child **NOT** to share hats, scarves, brushes, combs, and hair fasteners.

Usually you can get rid of lice by taking self-care steps that include using nonprescription shampoo that's specifically formulated to kill lice. These can be found at pharmacies and grocery stores. It's very important to follow the directions on the product's box or container. You will have to treat your child's hair 2 times (day 1 & day 8) in order to stop the nits from hatching. If you're pregnant, don't use any anti-lice shampoo until after talking to your doctor. If your child has a confirmed case of lice, all household members should be checked for head lice, and only those with live lice or nits within ½ inch from the scalp should be treated - preferably all at the same time. **Your child may return to school after 1 shampoo treatment.**

It's important to clean hair care items and bedding of the individual with infestation. Only other items, clothing, furniture, or carpeting that have been in contact with the head of the person with lice in the 24 - 48 hours before treatment should be considered for cleaning. Washing, soaking, or drying items at 130degrees F. will kill stray lice or nits. Furniture, carpeting, car seats, and other fabrics can be vacuumed. Other items, if needed, can be bagged in plastic for 2 weeks to kill nits that may have survived.

If you have any questions, or would like me to check your child's head, please call the school office (458-5543) or you may call me at (901)870-6706.

Janet Adair, RN, CPNP

