



Licebusters

HEAD LICE

If a case of head lice is found on a child the family is informed by phone and in the form a letter with treatment advice. Board policy states the child is able to remain at school for the rest of the day. The class also receives a letter informing the parents of a case of head lice in the class and asks parents to be vigilant in checking their own child's hair regularly. Information that goes home to any family contains suggestions on what to do. The child with head lice may return to school after the family has indicated to the office that the first treatment has been completed. Treatment of head lice has two phases, immediate and 7-10 days after the first treatment.

What to look for

- Head lice eggs or nits are usually attached to individual hairs close to the root within 12 mm (1/2 in). If nits are further down the strand they are empty egg shells from an earlier problem and do not usually indicate a current outbreak.
- Nits are white, grey or brown. Nits may look like dandruff but cannot be flicked off like dandruff. The nits can only be removed if you slide them off the end of the strand.
- Start by looking at the nape of the neck, behind the ears and above the forehead.
- Check the rest of the head, by parting small sections of hair and looking closely for nits. Dark blonde or light brown hair seems to be harder to screen as nit color blends well with the hair colour
- Wash hands after screening check

Head Lice Information and Facts

Head lice are an ongoing problem in today's society. They are not a major public health concern in that they do not spread disease. They become a community concern because of the nuisance and discomfort surrounding an occurrence of it for your child/family or class.

Head lice are parasites that only infect human scalps. They are spread by head to head contact and do not cause disease. Head lice are common where children play or work closely together. Occasionally throughout the school year, some families are faced with an active case of head lice. All parents are asked to use due diligence throughout the year by checking your child's hair on a regular basis and to inform the school if your child has head lice. The following information is meant to educate and assist parents in understanding the school protocols, being involved with our school program, identifying and treating head lice.

Did you know that?

- lice are about the size of a sesame seed
- lice love clean hair
- lice do not jump or fly, but crawl quickly
- lice bites make the scalp itchy
- nits are eggs which are attached to the hair very close to the scalp
- nits cannot be removed by brushing or using a hair dryer
- nits are not easy to pull off; different from dry scalp or dandruff
- adult head lice lay about 10 eggs a day
- it takes 7-10 days for the nits to hatch
- it takes 6-10 days for lice to become adult

Head Lice Management in our Community

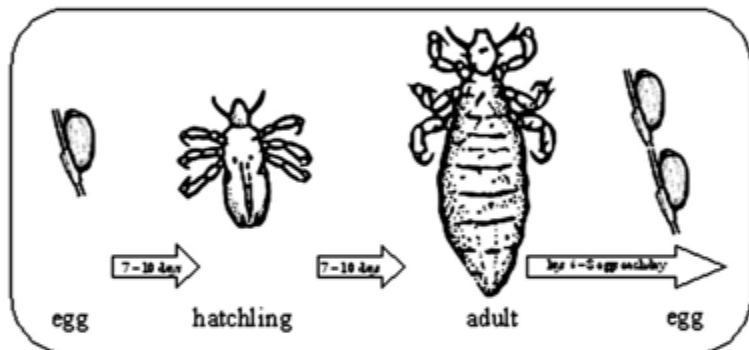
To achieve optimal control of head lice in our Community, the following are some helpful hints and suggestions.

1. The primary responsibility for control of head lice rests with the family and the community
2. Trained volunteers can assist families and the community by having routine head lice screening
3. Show due diligence and check your child for lice on a regular basis, especially if they show signs of scratching or if a friend/classmate reports having it
4. Continue to teach your child not to share hats, helmets, hair barrettes, towels, combs and brushes etc.
5. Any student with long hair should have it tied back, especially if a case has been identified in the class or school
6. Volunteer for the school lice committee, help us in keeping our community head lice free

Facts of Lice

Head lice are parasites that only infect human scalps. They are spread by head to head contact but do not cause disease. They do affect the health of our children through cost to families for treatment, frustration, unnecessary embarrassment and sometimes education time lost.

- Lice love clean human hair
- Lice do not jump or fly
- Lice bites make the scalp itchy
- Nits are lice eggs, which are attached to the hair, close to the scalp. They are as tiny as dandruff or about 1/3 the size of a sesame seed
- You can't get rid of nits by brushing, or with a hair dryer
- After the head lice hatch, the shell of the nit stays stuck to the hair. If it is more than 12 mm (1/2 inch) away from the scalp, it is probably empty
- Lice are spread by head-to-head contact and by sharing brushes, hats, or other items that come in contact with the head
- Head lice are common where children play or work closely together
- **Lice do not cause disease....they just bug us!**



What to do if your child has head lice?

1. Do not panic, it is not a sign of lack of cleanliness or a health issue. If you have found the head lice please contact the school.
2. Check the heads of all family members for lice and nits.
3. Immediately treat the scalp of all infested family members at the same time.
4. Wash in hot water, all bedding, towels and clothes used in the past 2-3 days including those worn during treatment. Only items that have had direct contact with the affected person(s) need to be washed.
5. Wash hair brushes, combs, and hair accessories with hot soapy water
6. Anything that cannot be washed ie. Stuffed toys, pillows, blankets can be treated by placing in a closed bag for 10 days; or putting in a hot dryer for 20 minutes or putting in the freezer for 48 hours or ironing the items.
7. Continue to check and pull nits every day and repeat hair treatment 7-10 days after first initial treatment. This is essential in quickly getting the head lice under control.

Brushes, Accessories + Your Home

After you've treated the person, you also need to take care of your home!

Head lice eggs can sometimes find their way into bedding, furniture, toys and other items, making a second infestation likely if you don't take proper precautions. Opinions vary as to the proper way to handle your house after a child has come home with head lice. Here's the traditional advice:

The furniture: Wipe down any leather or vinyl furniture with wet, warm cloth. Vacuum upholstered furniture with your vacuum cleaner. This will help remove any hair and nits that may be attached to the furniture. Do the same for your car seats, and vacuum your rugs and carpets, too. Although pesticide sprays are on the market, most health experts caution against their use. These sprays are designed for furniture and rooms, and they claim to kill any possible live lice or lice eggs. However, they're quite toxic, and should probably only be used in cases of extreme infestation.

The bedroom: Wash all bedding, especially sheets and pillow cases. Again, vacuum the rugs so you remove all stray hairs. If your child has stuffed animals, vacuum them as well. You may also tumble stuffed animals in the dryer on hot heat for about 30 minutes. This should kill any head lice or lice eggs. Some experts suggest that you place all stuffed animals and non-washable bedding in big plastic bags. Sealing the bags for two weeks would suffocate any lice or lice eggs. However, this is probably more work than necessary. But feel free to do it if it makes you feel safer.

The bathroom: All combs, hairbrushes and hair accessories should be treated. Clean them to remove any remaining hair. You may want to disinfect them by soaking them in hot, soapy water. If it makes you feel more secure, you can also soak them in a mix of water and head lice shampoo. All towels, washcloths and other items should be thoroughly laundered.

These steps are traditionally recommended for homes where a family member has head lice. However, some experts suggest that all this work is more than necessary. Since both lice and lice eggs require the warmth of a human body to survive, many people believe that the parasites are probably already dead by the time you get around to washing the bedding. Moreover, it's not just warmth that head lice require - they specifically require human blood to survive. Pets, like dogs and cats, do not get human head lice.

The Last Word

The discovery of head lice is a nuisance and for some families brings a feeling of embarrassment. It is important to maintain a child's self-esteem and respect of the families. After 4th grade, infestations are rare, so consider it a parenting challenge that will pass in time.