

Head Lice Information for Elementary Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

This letter is being sent to you as a preventative measure in the control of head lice in school. Research has proven that head lice is more prevalent in the fall and spring and after long breaks. We are aware of the concern parents/guardians have regarding the spread, control, and treatment of head lice and are writing to ask your help in advance. Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

According to the CDC, head lice are spread most commonly by direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. However, much less frequently they are spread by sharing clothing or belongings onto which lice have crawled or nits attached to shed hairs may have fallen. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the scalp. Lice move by crawling; they do not hop or fly.

The following are steps that can be taken to help prevent and control the spread of head lice:

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camp).
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes.
- Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfest combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid re-infestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin

Measures which parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to institute to help prevent and control the spread of head lice:

- Student's hair should be checked for head lice on a regular basis at home. There will no longer be classroom screenings – only close contacts will be checked by the nurse – there will no longer be parent written notification regarding head lice in the school due to student confidentiality.
- Students should not attend school with untreated head lice
- Parents/guardians should regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary;
- Parents/guardians should notify the school nurse if their child is found to have live lice and advise when appropriate treatment was commenced.
- Parents/guardians should notify the parents/guardians of your child's friends so they have an early opportunity to detect and treat their children, if necessary.
- If your child attends extra-curricular activities or daycare, please let them know your child has head lice so they can take appropriate measures.
- Students with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to school after appropriate treatment has begun. Students should report to the school nurse after being treated. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice.

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MS/HS School Nurse: Peggy Antolik RN 255-8741