

## **IMPORTANT FROM THE SCHOOL NURSE**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

No school year goes by without at least a few cases of head lice. Nationwide estimates are 16-17,000 new cases every day. So, if your child has, or has had head lice you are not alone.

One of the most common misconceptions is that head lice only happen to the poor, the unclean or the uneducated. For a long time, it was thought that people got head lice only from being in filthy environments or because of poor hygiene. We know that **ISN'T** true. Head lice are found on children who attend any school, who shampoo daily and have short or long hair. In fact, head lice prefer a clean head. It can happen to anyone.

Head lice are small insects about the size of a sesame seed. They are tan or grayish and are difficult to see. They like to be in dark places and will quickly hide under hair when you part it to look for them. It is usually easier to find the nit or eggs. Nits are whitish and tear drop shaped and very tiny. You will find them attached to the hair. They are "glued" on and are difficult to remove. Head lice can't fly or jump, so don't be concerned when you are looking for them.

**We ask that you check your child and your family members. Everyone who has lice needs to be treated. Don't worry about the family pet, head lice only live on people.**

Please notify the school ASAP so the spread in your child's classroom can be limited. The child must be checked by the school before entering school after the first treatment.

To successfully treat head lice several steps need to be followed:

1. Use of lice (pediculicide) shampoo. There are several brands available, without prescription at local pharmacies. Read the label carefully and follow directions. Consult your physician before using any lice product on pregnant/nursing women, infants, or those with allergies.
2. Comb out the nits when the hair is wet. Use the comb that came with the shampoo or a separate one can be purchased. Many people find a metal comb more effective. It is time consuming but very important to remove all nits. Check daily and keep removing nits. A second treatment, 7-10 days after the first treatment is required to eliminate any new lice or nits. If after two treatments lice still exist consult your physician.
3. Since lice can survive off the body for several hours and nits for longer, it is important that your immediate environment be cleaned. Vacuum carpets, rugs, upholstered furniture and mattresses, car seats and headrests. Wash recently worn clothing, towels, sheets and linens in hot soapy water and dry in a hot dryer. Items that can't be washed or vacuumed can be kept in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks.

All of these measures take time and patience. If you have a computer handy here is a helpful website – [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

Sincerely,

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