

Guidelines for Handling Head Lice

During the first week of school, all students in grades K-8 will be checked for head lice. As cases are discovered throughout the year, additional checks will be conducted. The school will make every attempt to keep this as controlled as possible. To help prevent this problem before it starts, the following information is being provided. Should your child get head lice - **DO NOT PANIC! IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE!**

FACTS:

- * Lice are parasitic insects that live from blood obtained by biting the scalp.
- * Anyone can get head lice—cleanliness and age are not determining factors.
- * Lice **DO NOT** jump; they crawl
- * Head lice **CANNOT** be contracted from animals, trees, or grass.
- * The live louse is transmitted from one person to another through linens, coats, hats, combs, brushes, or other direct contact.
- * Lice lay their eggs (nits) only on the hair.
- * Lice can live 30-35 days off the human host.

LIFECYCLE:

The adult female lays eggs (nits) which she “glues” to the hair shaft near the root of the hair. These nits hatch in about 8-10 days. During its 30 day life, the female louse can lay from 30-140 eggs. Usually the louse lays her eggs at night at the rate of 6 every 24 hours.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR:

The louse is oblong, usually grayish white with dark margins, and about the size of a pin head. The eggs (nits) are silvery in color and much more difficult to see. The egg is also difficult to slide off the hair follicle. The areas to look for nits are usually behind the ears or the back of the head along with the hair line. Persistent itching and bites on the head, or rash, are also possible symptoms.

PREVENTION:

The only measures you can take for prevention is to remind your child(ren) of the following:

- * **DO NOT** wear other people’s coats or hats.
- * **DO NOT** use other people’s combs, brushes, or other hair accessories.
- * **DO** keep your hair clean, washing daily is very helpful as lice do not like clean hair.

TREATMENT:

Live lice need **SPECIAL** shampoos that can be harmful if used too much. Therefore, it is very important that cleaning procedures and nit removal be done properly and quickly so that excessive absences do not occur. The most effective treatments known to kill both lice and nits are “Rid”, “Nix”, and “Kwell” (Kwell must have a prescription to obtain. Be sure to follow directions for application.)

CAUTION:

The nits are not always killed, so as a safety precaution, the nits **MUST** be removed by combing after treatment has been completed. Everyone in the household should be treated, however, check with your physician before treating pregnant women or children under the age of two. **ALL** linens, clothing, and personal items must be washed. Line dry or use the dryer on the “hot” setting. Sweep **ALL** carpets and furniture! Items that cannot be cleaned easily such as stuffed animals or pillows must be stored in plastic bags for 4 weeks (the life cycle of lice).

ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACT:

The lice **CAN** become resistant to these shampoos the more they are used. Therefore, it is **VERY** important to do the best you can the first time you use the shampoo.

Upon returning to school, a parent/guardian **MUST** bring the child to the nurse’s office for a return check (if they had been previously sent home). If problems still exist, the nurse will offer suggestions and show the parent/guardian the areas that need attention. If there is no improvement, the child will be sent home again.

RECURRENT CASES OFTEN RESULT IN EXCESSIVE ABSENCES AND INFESTATION OF OTHER STUDENTS. The school will report recurrent cases to the Division of Families and Children.

Please contact the school nurse at 567-9741 if you have any questions.