

## January 2018

### Attention Parents!

As most of you are probably aware, there have been cases of head lice in our schools this year. While the overall incidence is less than 1% of our total student body, and lice are a common childhood condition, I am asking for increased awareness from you, our parents and guardians.

I have put in many hours, (along with my wonderful helpers) checking students, randomly checking classrooms, doing follow up checks and working with custodians and teachers to keep our school as clean as possible. While much of this work is an effort to be proactive in dealing with lice, it is incredibly time consuming and takes time away from other health related issues.

As with most health related issues, early detection and treatment are important. Parents should get in the habit of checking their child weekly for nits and live lice. If something is found, please let me know, and I will gladly assist with checking to ensure treatment is effective. Please don't assume that your child is "all clear" because you haven't heard from me. It is impossible for me to check every child in the school each week. Detection should ideally happen at home.

I am attaching some information on head lice. Please read it over and let me know if I can answer any questions. I am here to help any way I can, but need your help too.

Thank you,

Katie Walsh-Kallstrom RN-BSN School Nurse

#### **Head Lice: What Parents Need to Know:**

Head lice are a common problem that usually affects school-aged children and their families. They can attach to the hair of anyone's head. It doesn't matter if the hair is clean or dirty. Head lice are found worldwide in all different places, such as in homes or schools or the country or city. It doesn't matter how clean, dirty, rich, or poor the place or person is.

Though head lice may be a nuisance, they don't cause serious illness or carry any diseases. Head lice can be treated at home, but it's important to check with the doctor first.

**Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help parents and caregivers check for, treat, and prevent the spread of head lice.**

## **What are head lice?**

Head lice are tiny bugs about the size of a sesame seed. Their bodies are usually pale and gray, but their color may vary. One of these tiny bugs is called a louse.

Head lice feed on small amounts of blood from the scalp. They can usually live 1 to 2 days without a blood meal.

Lice lay and attach their eggs to hair close to the scalp. The eggs and their shell casings are called nits. They are oval and about the size of a knot in thread and usually yellow to white. Some nits may blend in with some people's hair color, making them hard to see, and are often confused for dandruff or hair spray droplets. Nits attach to the hair with a sticky substance that holds them firmly in place. After the eggs hatch, the empty nits stay on the hair shaft.

## **What is the life cycle of head lice?**

Head lice live about 28 days. They develop in 3 phases: egg (also called a nit), nymph, and adult louse.

- **Egg or nit.** Eggs or nits hatch in 6 to 9 days. Eggs are usually found within 4 to 6 mm of the scalp and do not survive if they are farther away.
- **Nymph.** The nymph looks like an adult head louse but is much smaller (about the size of a pinhead [1.5 mm]). Nymphs become adults about 7 days after hatching.
- **Adult louse.** An adult louse can multiply fast and lay up to 10 eggs a day. It takes only about 12 to 14 days for newly hatched eggs to reach adulthood.

This cycle can repeat itself every 3 weeks if head lice are left untreated.

## **How common are head lice?**

Head lice are most common in preschool- and elementary school-aged children. Each year millions of school-aged children in the United States get head lice. However, anyone can get head lice. Head lice are found worldwide.

## **How do head lice spread?**

Head lice are crawling insects. They cannot jump, hop, or fly. The main way head lice spread is from close, prolonged head-to-head contact. There is a very small chance that head lice will spread by sharing items such as combs, brushes, and hats.

## **What are symptoms of head lice?**

Itching on the areas where head lice are present is the most common symptom. However, it may take up to 4 to 6 weeks after lice get on the scalp before the scalp becomes sensitive to

the lice saliva and begins to itch. Most of the itching happens behind the ears or at the back of the neck. Also, itching caused by head lice can last for weeks, even after the lice are gone.

### **How do you check for head lice?**

Regular checks for head lice are a good way to spot head lice before they have time to multiply and infest (are present in large numbers) your child's head.

- Seat your child in a brightly lit room.
- Part the hair.
- Look for crawling lice and for nits on your child's scalp a section at a time.
- Live lice are hard to find. They avoid light and move quickly.
- Nits will look like small white or yellow-brown specks and be firmly attached to the hair near the scalp. The easiest place to find them is at the hairline at the back of the neck or behind the ears. Nits can be confused with many other things such as dandruff, dirt particles, or hair spray droplets. The way to tell the difference is that nits are firmly attached to hair, while dandruff, dirt, or other particles are not.
- Use a fine-tooth comb to help you search the scalp section by section.

### **How do you treat head lice?**

Check with your child's doctor before beginning any head lice treatment. The most effective way to treat head lice is with head lice medicine. After each treatment, comb/pick out all nits you can find under a bright light. This is very time consuming, but important in successful treatment.

## Head Lice Medicines

Treatment	Description	Brand Name Product(s)
Permethrin lotion (1%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available without a prescription.</li> <li>Apply to shampooed and towel-dried hair; then rinse off after 10 minutes.</li> <li>Kills lice; does not kill lice eggs.</li> <li>Retreatment is recommended between days 9 and 10 if live lice are seen.</li> <li>Approved for use in children 2 months and older.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nix</li> </ul>
Pyrethrin-based product (shampoo or hair mousse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Available without a prescription.</li> <li>Apply to dry hair and rinse off after 10 minutes.</li> <li>Kills lice; does not kill lice eggs.</li> <li>Retreatment is recommended between days 9 and 10 if live lice are seen.</li> <li>Approved for use in children 2 years and older. Should not be used in people who are allergic to chrysanthemums.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A-200</li> <li>Licide</li> <li>R&amp;C</li> <li>RID</li> <li>Pronto</li> <li>Triple X</li> </ul>
Malathion lotion (0.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescription needed.</li> <li>Apply to dry hair and rinse off after 8–12 hours.</li> <li>Kills lice and lice eggs.</li> <li>A second treatment is recommended in 7–9 days if live lice are seen.</li> <li>Approved for use in children 6 years or older. Not recommended for children younger than 24 months.</li> <li>Flammable; may cause chemical burns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ovide</li> </ul>
Benzyl alcohol lotion (5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescription needed.</li> <li>Apply to dry hair and rinse off after 10 minutes. Repeat in 9–10 days.</li> <li>Kills lice; does not kill lice eggs.</li> <li>Contains no neurotoxic pesticide.</li> <li>Approved for use in infants and children 6 months and older. Not recommended for infants younger than 6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ulesfia lotion</li> </ul>
Spinosad topical suspension (0.9%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescription needed.</li> <li>Apply to dry hair and rinse off after 10 minutes.</li> <li>Kills lice and lice eggs.</li> <li>A second treatment is recommended in 7 days if live lice are seen.</li> <li>Approved for use in infants and children 6 months and older. Not recommended for infants younger than 6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Natroba</li> </ul>
Ivermectin lotion (0.5%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prescription needed.</li> <li>Apply to dry hair and rinse off after 10 minutes.</li> <li>Kills lice; does not kill lice eggs. However, may prevent newly hatched lice from living.</li> <li>Only 1 application is needed.</li> <li>Approved for use in infants and children 6 months and older. Not recommended for infants younger than 6 months.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sklice</li> </ul>