



HEAD LICE! OH NO!!

Head lice are a chronic problem in children between the ages of 3-11 years old. In school it is safe to assume that one or more students may have head lice at any given time during the year. All parents should familiarize themselves with information about lice so they know how to detect and treat lice on their children. **It is the parents' responsibility to check their children regularly for head lice, whether or not symptoms are present.**

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are tiny, wingless, gray-brown insects that live in the human hair. Lice hatch from small eggs, called nits, which attach very firmly to the hair. Nits appear as flecks of dandruff, but unlike dandruff, they cannot be flicked out of the hair. Once a louse lays eggs in a child's hair, the eggs hatch in about 7-12 days. The new lice reach maturity in 8-9 days. With close inspection, the live lice and/or the nits may be observed. Itching and scratching of the scalp and the nape of the neck are usually the first evidence of a head lice infestation. By the time lice are discovered on a person's head, they have probably been there for 4-6 weeks.

HOW ARE HEAD LICE SPREAD?

Lice move by crawling, not flying or jumping. They typically crawl from one head to another through direct and extended contact. Children can be exposed to lice in many places. Direct head-to-head contact is almost always necessary for the spread of lice to happen. Play dates, slumber parties, Scouts and the sharing of hats, hair brushes, hair bows, and towels are all common ways lice may be spread. Head lice are not likely to be spread in the school environment or by the sharing of headphones and helmets.

HOW ARE HEAD LICE TREATED?

Regular shampoo will not kill head lice or the nits. A treatment plan involves use of a special medicated shampoo for lice, removal of nits, cleaning of the environment, and careful monitoring. All family members and close contacts should be checked. Treatment is recommended **ONLY** for those individuals with live lice and/or nits found close to the scalp. Treatment does not prevent lice; it only kills live lice. It is very important to closely follow the manufacturer's instructions. It is important to note that treatment with a medicated shampoo does not kill nits. Nits need to be combed out of hair before they hatch. Contact your Health Care Provider before treating children under the age of 2 years.

The following steps are recommended:

- 1) Check your child's head regularly.
- 2) If live lice or nits are found within ¼ inch of the scalp, treat with medicated shampoo,
- 3) Remove nits from your child's hair,
- 4) Follow recommended household cleaning.
- 5) Re-treat in 7-10 days.
- 6) Continue to check your child on a regular basis.

If you think your child has head lice or if you have any questions, please contact your health care provider or school nurse.