

Wrentham Public Schools

Head Lice Management (Pediculosis) At Home and At School

Head lice are a common occurrence among school age children and a source of anxiety and panic for their parents. Hopefully, this information will help to dispel the myths surrounding head lice and help minimize the occurrence of lice in school this year.

Head lice are tiny insects that live only on people's scalp and hair. (Lice do not live on pets) Head lice do not jump, fly, or leap from host to host. They crawl directly from person to person or onto shared personal items such as combs, hats, clothing, towels or bedding. **Head lice do not discriminate and are not a sign of unclean people or homes.** Actually, people with clean, well groomed hair are more likely to be infested.

Lice tend to adapt their color to their surroundings, so lice found on dark haired individuals will be darker (red or black) than lice found on people with light hair. Adult lice are about ¼ inch long.

The female lays about 5-10 eggs per day throughout the 30 day life cycle. The eggs (called nits) are tiny, silvery white and shaped like teardrops. The nits are firmly attached with a cement-like substance to the strand of hair about ¼ inch from the scalp. Unlike dandruff, nits cannot be easily removed or moved up or down the strand of hair. Nits usually hatch within 7-10 days.

The lice bugs may be hard to find since they crawl very quickly to avoid light. Nits will be easier to find. If left untreated, head lice can quickly multiply in number. You need to treat the lice as soon as it is detected.

To minimize the occurrence of head lice:

- Routinely, check your child's hair twice a week for nits. Look through the whole head concentrating on the hair close to the scalp, behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.
- Reinforce no sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes, hair bands, hats, helmets, etc.
- **Remember, it only takes one bug to start the cycle.**

Signs of head lice:

- Be suspicious if your child complains of intense itching of the head or scalp or if you notice that your child is scratching his/her head frequently.
- A rash around the back of the neck or behind the ears from scratching.
- Sleeplessness or waking up frequently during the night

If your child had lice:

- Contact your child's doctor for recommendation of appropriate treatment.
- **PLEASE** inform your school nurse **immediately** of any cases so that any outbreak can be contained.
- **The Wrentham Public Schools has a no nit policy. Your child's hair must be treated and all nits removed before he/she can return to school. Your child must be checked by the school nurse upon return to school.**

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD HAS HEAD LICE

Check Every Member OF The Family- It is important that you inspect all family members for **at least 2 weeks.** This will help reduce the spread to other family members. Head lice should be suspected when there is intense itching and scratching of the scalp and nape of the neck. If you look closely at the scalp, you will see small, whitish eggs attached to the hair strand, especially around the ears and the nape of the neck. Although these eggs may look like dandruff, dandruff can be easily removed from the hair while lice eggs cannot.

Use An Effective Head Lice Treatment Recommended By Your Doctor-

Be sure to follow the directions on the lice treatment product carefully as application directions can vary for different products. Some lice treatment products may need to be reapplied in 7-10 days. Check with your doctor before treating infants, pregnant women or anyone with cuts or scratches on their head or neck.

Remove All Nits (Lice Eggs)- A fine tooth special nit comb is needed to remove the eggs which have attached to the hair strand with a cement-like substance by the female louse. This is a **TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS.** All nits must be removed since re-infestation can occur if just one live egg remains on the hair strand. **Eggs hatch in 7-10 days, so continue to check your child's hair daily for at least 2 weeks after treatment.**

Wash Clothes, Bed Linens, Towels- Use hot water (at least 130 degrees) to wash all bedding (sheets, blankets, towels etc.) and all personal clothing including hats, scarves, and coats. Dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items not washable must be dry cleaned or stored in a tightly sealed bag for at least 2 weeks. Items such as headphones and helmets should be similarly bagged and stored.

Vacuum Everywhere- To make sure the rest of your home is free of lice, you should vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, couches, chairs, even automobile upholstery and car seats.