

**Head lice** are a recurring problem among school children. Please check your child's hair weekly for lice or nits. All cases must be reported to the school nurse, in addition to close contacts, in an effort to control an outbreak. Children are excluded from school until he/she has been treated and all nits are gone.

*An example of a lice letter that goes home to parents is shown below*

Dear parent or guardian: A student in your child's class has head lice. Please do not be alarmed, as this is a common occurrence in schools. Head lice are not a sign of unclean people or homes.

**Please take these precautions:**

1. Check your child's hair for eggs (also called nits).
2. If you suspect your child has head lice, ask your health care provider to diagnose the problem and recommend appropriate treatment.
3. Tell us if your child is diagnosed as having head lice.
4. If head lice is diagnosed, do not return your child to school until she or he has been treated and all the nits have been removed.

**Information about head lice:**

*What are they?* Head lice are tiny insects that live only on people's scalp and hair. They hatch from small eggs (nits) that are firmly attached to the individual hairs near the scalp and cannot be easily moved up or down the hair (as can specks of dandruff). Nits may be found throughout the hair but are most often located at the back of the scalp near the neck and behind the ears. The eggs hatch in 6-10 days, with new lice reaching adulthood about 2-3 weeks later. The lice live by biting and sucking blood from the scalp. Lice can survive 1-2 days away from the scalp. Until a person with head lice is treated they can transmit them to others.

*How should you check for head lice?* You probably will not see the lice, only the eggs. These are tiny, pearl-gray, oval-shaped specks attached to the hair near the scalp. Look carefully, using a magnifying glass and natural light. Search for nits at the back of the neck, behind the ears, and at the top of the head.

*How does a person get head lice?* Anyone who has close contact with an infested person or shares personal items can become infested. Lice are spread **only** by crawling from person to person directly or onto shared personal items, such as combs, brushes, head coverings, clothing, bedding, or towels.

*What should you do if your child has head lice?* If your child does have head lice, everyone in your family should be checked, and anyone with nits should definitely be treated.

To get rid of head lice:

1. **Use a medicine that your health care provider prescribes or recommends. Use any of these products very carefully, and consult a physician before treating children less than 2 years of age, pregnant or nursing women, or people with extensive cuts or scratches on the head or neck.**
2. After appropriate treatment, all nits must be removed. This is a difficult and time-consuming process because nits have such a firm grip on the hair. You can remove them with a special nit-removal comb. A metal tooth comb, like the

LiceMeister, is the best comb to use. Our school requires the removal of all nits to lessen confusion about whether your child is still infested. It is sometimes hard to tell if nits are alive or dead.

3. **Check for nits daily for the next 21 days.** Most treatments recommend a re-application 7 days later.
4. **Clean personal items and surroundings:**
  - Machine wash all washable and possibly infested items in **hot** water. Dry them in a **hot** dryer.
  - Put non-washable items (furry toys or pillows) in a **hot** dryer for 20 minutes
  - Seal items that cannot be washed or dried in a plastic bag for 10 days (any eggs or lice present will die in this time)
  - Wash combs and brushes in a shampoo approved to kill lice, or soak in hot water for at least 5 minutes.
  - Thoroughly vacuum rugs, upholstered furniture, and mattresses.
  - Do not use insecticide sprays because they can be harmful to people and animals.

*When can your child return?* If your child was diagnosed with head lice, he or she can come back as soon as the shampoo has been used, you have removed all the nits from your child's hair, and you have cleaned or stored personal items. Remember that you must keep checking your child's hair for new nit's everyday for at least 3 weeks and then periodically thereafter. **Your child must be checked by the school nurse before he or she is allowed to come back to school. We have a "No Nit Policy" at school which means all eggs must be removed.**