

Dear Families,

In order to correct the enormous amount of misinformation about head lice, here are some important facts and tools to assist you in detecting and treating head lice.

What are head lice?

- ❖ Head lice are tiny (like sesame seeds), wingless bloodsucking insects that feed on the human scalp.
- ❖ They do not infest animals.
- ❖ They usually live for less than a day when separated from the human host.
- ❖ They do not fly or jump from one host to another, but they do crawl at a high speed.
- ❖ They infest people regardless of social and ethnic status.
- ❖ They are NOT an indication of poor hygiene or parental neglect.

Where do head lice come from?

- ❖ The main method of transfer is by direct head contact between children - they crawl from one head to another.
- ❖ Transfer also occurs through shared combs, brushes and other headgear, but this is far less likely.
- ❖ Most cases begin a month or more before they are discovered.

How do you know if your child has head lice?

- ❖ **Examine your child weekly to catch an infestation as early as possible.**
- ❖ Use a bright light to examine your child's head.
- ❖ Work in small areas (about 1 inch apart), parting the hair with a comb, to look for eggs attached to the hair near the scalp. Because lice crawl so quickly, you are less likely to find the lice themselves. The eggs (also called nits) will look like small white or tan specks, and will be firmly attached to the hair.
- ❖ If you observe your child scratching his/her head, that's a sign of possible infestation – check for lice!

How do I end head lice infestation?

- ❖ **KILL THE LICE:** A lice-killing product is available in pharmacies and drug departments and will kill lice and some eggs. Reapplication of shampoo and egg removal is required to ensure complete effectiveness. Follow instructions on the label.
- ❖ **REMOVE ALL EGGS: The most important step in ending lice infestation is to remove ALL of the eggs (nits). Remaining eggs will hatch and cause reinfestation. THE MOST COMMON CAUSE OF REINFESTATION IS NOT REMOVING ALL THE EGGS OR NITS!**
- ❖ **CLEAN HOUSE:** To ensure a thorough job, wash, or dry-clean your child's clothes, bed sheets, combs, and brushes; put toys, bed pillows, and non-washable items in plastic bags for at least two (2) weeks, and throw away the bag. Vacuum your home thoroughly. Extraordinary cleaning measures are not necessary – your time is better spent properly removing the nits!

Please feel free to contact the nurse if you have questions. Exclusion from school is done on a case by case basis. The nurse will be in close contact with parents of students dealing with lice and can offer assistance with the treatment process.