



## **Head Lice (Pediculosis) Information for Families**

*(Updated November, 2023)*

The purpose of this notice is to share some of the important facts about lice, some myths about lice that are still pervasive, and recommended steps for you to consider should your child be infected with head lice.

### **The Facts of Lice**

Head lice are a common problem in all elementary schools and unfortunately, our school is no exception. Although the diagnosis of head lice is very distressful, it is important to keep it in perspective - *lice is a common pediatric condition and poses no medical risk*. Unfortunately, however, there is still a stigma associated with the condition. There is no need for embarrassment! A few facts to keep in mind:

- Head lice are more commonly found on clean, healthy heads. In short, they do not like dirty hair.
- Head lice are transmitted from person to person, and hygiene is not a factor.
- The primary mode of transmission is head-to-head contact.
- The most common symptom of head lice infestation is itching; however, many children do not experience any itching at all.
- The presence of nits is the best way to detect lice. Nits are small whitish ovals, smaller than a sesame seed that are cemented to the hair shaft. Unlike dandruff, they cannot be brushed away.

### **The Myths of Lice**

There are [some common myths](#) about head lice that contribute to a lot of unnecessary anxiety. Here are just a few:

- Head lice spread by jumping or flying. ***NOT TRUE***
- Head lice spread disease. ***NOT TRUE***
- Head lice can live on animals and animals can spread them. ***NOT TRUE***
- Head lice can spread to other parts of your body. ***NOT TRUE***

### **School Attendance**

Students are not excluded from school as was once the common practice. Instead, they should stay in school when lice are discovered, be treated with an over-the-counter, overnight treatment, and return to school the next day.

### **Treatment:**

There are three important steps in treating head lice:

1. ***Kill the lice:*** There are various products on the market including pediculocides and natural, organic products. It is important to use products as directed.

2. **Remove all nits:** This is the single most important step in preventing re-infestation. It is best done by hand or with a special fine toothed metal comb (e.g., the LiceMeister comb). Many treatments claim to kill nits; however no product is 100% effective. Even one viable nit left in the head can cause a re-infestation.
3. **Clean the household:** Thoroughly vacuum and clean the home, paying special attention to bed linens, pillows, upholstery and carpeting. Wash items in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Dry cleaning is also effective. Items that aren't washable can be sealed in a plastic bag for a period of two weeks. **Household insecticide sprays should NOT be used**, since they may be harmful and are not effective.

### **Household Hints:**

1. Wash everything that your child has come in contact with in hot water, and dry in the dryer for 20 minutes. This includes clothes, washable soft toys, blankets, quilts, sheets, pillows and pillowcases. Any clothing items that cannot be washed should be dry cleaned or stored in a plastic bag for no less than two weeks.
2. Vacuum all carpets, furniture, mattresses, drapes, car seats etc. that the child may have come in contact with. Remember lice can live 48 hours without a human host.
3. Clean all brushes, combs or other hair items by soaking in hot water and a disinfectant. It is best for each family member to have his/her own comb and brush.
4. Make a family policy not to share hats, scarves, hair items not only with each other, but with others outside the home.
5. Check your child's head frequently after treatment. Live lice may live to 24 hours after treatment and may need to be removed manually. Frequent head checks and removal of all nits is the only way to guarantee elimination of this pest. Typical combs do not work in fully removing the nits.
6. Lice do not die in the shower or at the pool. They have breathing tube which they can close in adverse circumstances and will survive for some time without air.
7. Lice are not killed by the blow dryer.

***Please help your child to be compassionate. No one chooses to be infested with lice. It is a common pediatric condition and poses no medical risk. Working together and sharing ideas and solutions that may have worked for you will go so much farther than blame and ridicule.***

### **In Addition:**

1. Parents should check their children on a regular basis to prevent the spread of lice.
2. Children should be instructed not to share hats, combs, brushes and hair ornaments.
3. Head-to-head contact should be avoided.

### **For More Information on Head Lice:**

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control](#)
- [New York State Center for School Health](#)
- [National Association of School Nurses](#)
- [The Cleveland Clinic](#)

There are a number of lice removal services in Westchester county, all of which can be found with a simple Google search. Should you have any questions, please contact the school nurse.