

Lice infestations



Lice infestations may occur in any age group, but it is more common among elementary school children. It is not considered to be a health-risk or a disease. It is usually passed from person to person by direct head contact, but can also be spread through shared objects (combs, clothing, barrettes, hats, etc.). Sharing or exchanging of these items should be discouraged. The most common symptom of infestation is intense itching on the back of the head or neck. Students may be checked at school for the presence of lice if symptoms are present or students arriving from travel outside the country. We encourage parents to learn about head lice and check their children regularly for the presence of live lice and nits. This is the best way to detect head lice throughout the year. Identification and treatment for lice is a parent responsibility. Routine school screenings will not be done. Students identified as having signs of head lice are not allowed in school until they are louse-free and have received appropriate treatment. Please inform the school when head lice are detected, so that the School Nurse can work with you to ensure all treatment measures are implemented and your child is lice-free. Students will need to be seen by the School Nurse following lice treatment prior to admittance into school and subsequently after the second treatment. If the presence of lice and nits are identified, please follow the steps below to take care of the problem.

1. Check every member of the family. Lice are hard to spot, so look for tiny white eggs (nits) on hair shafts, near the scalp, especially at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Head lice are small, wingless, grayish-tan insects. They cannot fly or jump. A bright light is essential for observation and a magnifying glass is helpful. Only treat family members with lice or nits found in their hair. The school nurse can help you identify lice or nits in your child's hair. Please inform your child's close friends.
2. Use an effective head lice medicine, also called pediculicide, according to label instructions. Nix or Rid are common treatments found at the pharmacy. Read the entire instructions before using. Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions about the medicine. Do not shampoo for 1-2 days after using the treatment.
3. Remove all nits. This is a very important and necessary step. Gently comb the child's hair with the special nit removal comb. The combs that are provided with most lice treatment products are plastic and do not work as well on removing nits. Purchase a comb with metal-tines that is available at many pharmacies. A few days after the shampoo, you can also use hair conditioner or olive oil to help remove the nits. Lather hair with white conditioner, let sit for 15 minutes, and use the metal-tined comb to gently remove the nits. All nits should be removed. Every 2-3 days, check for and remove any nits found.
4. Head lice die very quickly once off the human head. However, the following 3 steps are used as an extra precaution. Wash clothes, bed linens, and towels. Use hot water, and then dry on the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items such as stuffed animals, headphones and hats that are not machine washable must be dry-cleaned or stored at room temperature in a tightly sealed plastic bag for at least 2 weeks.
5. Soak combs, brushes, etc., in hot, soapy water for at least 10 minutes.
6. Vacuum everywhere. To make sure the rest of your home is louse-free; you should vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture, even car seats. Do not use lice sprays. They can be dangerous and are not effective.

Once your child has been sent home with head lice, all treatment measures should be followed to treat the lice and prevent against re-infestation. On the following day, the child must report first to the office and then be rechecked by the School Nurse prior to admittance into school. We then request that the parent carefully monitor the child every 2-3 days and to re-treat their child after 9-10 days. The Nurse will rescreen all children infested with lice after the second treatment. Continue to check for 3-4 weeks after the second treatment to make sure all lice and nits are gone.

Please do not hesitate to call the School Nurse if you have any questions. The school nurse will work with you to ensure your child will be lice-free. Lice can be eliminated if you are informed and persistent.

For more information regarding lice and treatments, check the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website at www.cdc.gov or Kids Health website at www.kidshealth.org.