



LICE – 10 STEPS TO STAY AHEAD

General Information from your School Nurse

HEAD LICE (or pediculosis) are annoying little insects that live on the human scalp and feed on blood. They are a small, tan-colored critter (less than 1/8 long). They deposit tiny, gray/white eggs, known as “nits”, on the shaft of hair 2 – 4mm from the scalp because the eggs need the warmth from the scalp for hatching. They cannot live for more than 48 hours away from the scalp as adult insects, and eggs cannot hatch at temperatures lower than those found close to the scalp. **Lice do not carry disease but are a nuisance.** They are *not a* sign of uncleanness. Lice are transmitted by **direct** contact, head to head. They crawl, they do not fly or hop. **Once discovered, a child must stay home only until treated.**

STAYING AHEAD OF HEAD LICE:

1. Watch for signs/symptoms of head lice: excessive itching or scratching head especially behind ears and nape of neck.
2. If found or suspected, check family members for lice and nits/eggs at least once a week. It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass.
3. Only treat family members who have lice. Over the counter medications (pediculocides) that kill lice and nits are recommended. Most of these chemicals require 2 treatments 7-10 days apart. Consult with your physician for advice.
4. **Use these specialized shampoos following product instructions carefully.**
5. Removing all nits (eggs) with a special “nit comb”, or thumb and index finger must be done. This is a tedious job.
6. Wash infested articles in hot water, 130 degrees F (54.4 C) and machine dry on the hot setting. (hats, pillows, bedding, clothing, etc)
7. Toys and personal articles that cannot be laundered should be put in tightly tied plastic bags for than 2 weeks.
8. Head lice can live for 1 -2 days away from the scalp depending on the temperature; chemical treatment of the environment is *not* necessary. Vacuum floors, carpets, mattresses, and furniture.
9. **Continue to check head daily for at least 2-3 weeks after discovery. Removing nits EVERY day for 3 weeks is the most effective treatment.**
10. Help prevent lice infestation by discouraging your child from sharing hats, brushes and combs, clips, barrettes,” scrunchies”, etc.
11. Please refer to the Lowell Public Schools District Lice Policy at: www.lowell.k12.ma.us

SCHOOL NURSE

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