

A NOTE TO PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

LET'S LEARN ABOUT HEAD LICE was designed with school social workers and school nurses to help children and parents learn about head lice and their treatment and prevention.

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE? Head lice are small, wingless insects about the size of a sesame seed. They infest human hair and feed on blood by biting the scalp. The eggs of head lice are called nits. They are tiny, whitish specks that may be mistaken for dandruff, but cannot be brushed, washed or blown off. Nits are often found at the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and on top of the head, firmly attached to one side of the hair shaft at an angle.

WHO CAN GET HEAD LICE? Anyone. They are passed from one person to another when people share clothing, combs, brushes, headgear, hats, hair ornaments, scarves, coats, towels, or pillows. Head lice are also spread by personal contact, which is especially difficult for children to avoid.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CHILD HAS HEAD LICE? Many cases have no symptoms. It may take two to three weeks to develop warning signs such as itching and/or red marks on the scalp, neck, or behind the ears; swollen neck glands; fever; muscle ache; poor attention span; or unusual restlessness. Finding nits (lice eggs) or empty egg casings firmly attached to the hair on an angle confirms head lice.

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD HAS HEAD LICE:

1. Contact your child's school nurse. The nurse can confirm that your child has head lice and can check other children in your child's classroom.
2. Wash your child's hair with a medicated lice-treatment shampoo, available over the counter at your local drug or grocery store or through a prescription from your doctor. Apply medication as directed. All infested members of the family must be treated the same day. Check first with your physician if anyone to be treated is pregnant or nursing, is under two years old, is taking other medication or has other medical problems.
3. After applying medication, you must remove the lice and nits from the scalp and hair. This takes time and good light! Use a special, fine-toothed metal comb and work through 1-inch sections of hair to remove nits. Start at the scalp and comb the entire length of hair. You also may have to work through the hair, pulling along each strand with your fingernail.
4. Check all infected family members daily for new lice and nits. Do not use the medication again for at least seven days, but manually remove any nits and lice.
5. Wash in hot water or dry-clean bedding, clothing, towels, scarves, stuffed animals, and headgear. Vacuum home and car upholstery, carpets, mattresses, and pillows, then change the vacuum bag. Wash wood and metal furniture with soap and hot water.
6. A second shampoo treatment is usually required in 7-10 days to kill any lice or nits that survived the first treatment. More than a second treatment is **NOT** recommended. Keep a simple log to ensure a daily visual exam of your child's hair for three to four weeks after the second treatment.