

Head Lice Information for Parents “The Facts of Lice”

June 2014

In an effort to be proactive in educating parents about head lice, we would like to share some important information. It is not unusual to see occasional cases of head lice in school as it is most prevalent in children 3-11 years of age.

Pediculosis is not considered a health problem because it is not a carrier of communicable disease. However, head lice multiply quickly and can spread from person to person with *close head to head contact*. It is not associated with age, sex, race, social class or hygiene. Anyone can get lice. Therefore, to help prevent its spread, we request that you be alert for pediculosis in your child. Watch for persistent itching and scratching of the scalp and examine your child's head on a regular basis.



Magnified head louse



Magnified egg (Nit)

Head lice are tiny wingless grayish-white insects with flattened bodies. They are about 1-2 mm long and can take on the color of the hair to which they are attached. As a result, they are very difficult to see. They do not jump or fly. They do not live long when off a human host.

More easily seen are the eggs or nits. Nits are oval-shaped, brownish in color when alive, and often mistaken for dandruff. They lie very close to the scalp, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck and are firmly attached to the hair shaft. Unlike the live bugs, nits are unlikely to be transferred from one person to another.

If lice are discovered, information regarding treatment can be obtained from your pharmacist, family doctor or from your local Public Health Department. Never initiate treatment unless there is a clear diagnosis of head lice. Please notify the school nurse and the families of your child's friends if you do discover an infestation.

Even if pediculosis is not found at this time, it is recommended that you continue to inspect your child's hair every few days. Preventative treatments are costly and there is little scientific evidence regarding their effectiveness.

Other means of prevention include:

- encouraging children to keep their hats and scarves inside coat pockets & sleeves.
- discouraging children from sharing combs, brushes, hats, scarves or hair accessories.
- tying long hair in ponytails or braids.

Your co-operation is an important part of the efforts being made to control the spread of pediculosis in school.

PLEASE NOTE: Any student who has had a case of head lice, must check into the nurses office before being re-admitted back to class. Please contact the School Nurses at 508-261-7387 if you have any questions.