

Anyone Can Get Head Lice

Check Regularly – Treat Quickly

Help Keep Head Lice off Your Child

This article is for all parents as to increase head lice awareness so that you may take steps at home to help prevent your child from contracting head lice. Head lice infest millions of Americans a year. Anyone, rich or poor, clean or dirty, can get head lice. Head lice actually prefer clean scalps, so keeping hair short and clean is no protection against them. Children are the most likely hosts. Any time children come together, such as at play dates and at sleepovers, head lice cases commonly increase.

Human head lice can be caught only from other people with lice, or from objects that have been in contact with their hair. Please encourage your child not to share or trade personal items such as hats, combs, brushes, headbands, or barrettes. Direct head-to-head contact is the usual method of transmission. Lice do not jump, fly, or swim. They are, however, good crawlers. If one person in a family has head lice, others are likely to be infested.

If any child persistently scratches his or her head, consider the possibility of head lice. Check your child's head weekly for lice and/or nits (eggs). Mature lice, which are no larger than a sesame seed, avoid light and are hard to see. Lice eggs, called nits, are usually found very close to the scalp, typically within $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch. Look for tiny silver to whitish ovals that are glued to the hair shaft. Unlike dandruff and styling product residue, they cannot easily be flicked away. They are most likely found at the back of the head and near the ears.

Head lice are pests, not disease carrying pests. They cannot survive on pets, so family pets and other animals are not carriers. If you find head lice on your child, please treat them before sending them back to school. Your pharmacist can recommend a shampoo that will kill head lice and a rinse to help loosen nits. Follow the directions carefully. Do not use a conditioner before or after using lice shampoo or rewash hair for 1-2 days after using lice shampoo. To keep lice from coming back use a fine-tooth comb to remove nits, and be sure to wash bed linen, towels, clothing, and hairbrushes with hot water and place in the dryer if possible. Be sure to vacuum car seats, carpets and upholstery. Continue to examine all family members for 3 weeks, treating any lice found and combing out nits on a daily basis.

For more information on head lice or its treatment, please feel free to contact the building nurse at your child's school. Thank you for your help and support.