



## LICE NOTES

As many parents know, head lice can be a nuisance. They are highly contagious and a very common problem, especially for school age children. Having head lice is not a sign of poor hygiene or a lack of cleanliness. Lice are not dangerous and they don't spread disease. They can't jump or fly. Lice spread mainly through head to head contact, but sharing clothing, bed linens, combs, brushes, and hats can also help to pass them along.

The key to preventing lice outbreaks is early detection and treatment. You should check your children for lice periodically throughout the year, especially before school begins and after vacation breaks. Also check them frequently during any lice outbreak.

To screen for lice, part your child's hair into small sections. Under a strong light, check for any lice or nits. Look especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Nits are seen on the hair shaft close to the scalp. They look like a tiny yellow, tan, or grayish sac. Nits look like dandruff, only they can't be removed by brushing or shaking them off. The sac has to be peeled off of the hair shaft.

If lice or nits are detected, please contact your pediatrician and the school nurse. Follow the treatment exactly as prescribed. Some lice treatments may recommend repeating the treatment in 7 to 10 days to kill any newly hatched nits. **DO NOT use lice shampoo unless your child actually has head lice!!!**

To rid your home of the lice and to help prevent re-infestation:

- Wash all bedding and clothing in hot water and then dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean any clothing or bedding that isn't machine washable.
- Stuffed animals and plush toys that can't be washed can be put in airtight bags for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum carpets and any upholstered furniture (in your home and car).
- Soak hair-care items like combs, brushes, barrettes, hair ties, etc. in rubbing alcohol for 1 hour. You can also wash them in hot water or just throw them away.
- Instruct your children not to share combs, brushes, hats, sports headgear, etc. with others. If your daughter has long hair, it is best if she wears it up in a braid or ponytail.

We will continue to monitor any outbreaks at school. You must also continue to check your children on a regular basis. Remember even the cleanest of hair may be hiding lice, so please be vigilant.