

HEAD LICE INFORMATION SHEET-*The Basics*



FROM YOUR SCHOOL NURSE FOR YOU

1. What are head lice (also known as pediculosis capitis)?

- Head lice are tiny insects
- The head louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs, and is usually tan to grayish-white.
- Lice cannot hop or fly; they crawl.
- The tiny eggs/nits attach to the base of the hair shaft close to the scalp with a glue-like substance they produce from their saliva.
- The louse feeds by sucking very small amounts of blood from the scalp.
- Head lice can only survive 24-48 hours if they fall off a person and are not able to feed.

2. Are head lice dangerous? Can you get sick from them?

- Head lice are not known to spread disease.

3. Who can get head lice?

- Anyone can get head lice. There are approximately 6 million to 12 million infestations that occur every year in the United States.
- Having head lice is NOT a sign of poor hygiene.

4. How do you get head lice?

- Head lice can be transmitted directly by head-to-head contact such as during sleepovers – the lice crawl from one head to another head.
- Head lice can also be indirectly transmitted through contact with personal belongings of an infested person, such as combs, brushes, hats, scarves, hair ribbons, pillows, bed linens, etc.

5. How do you know if you or your child may have head lice?

- Head lice are easiest seen at the nape/back of the neck, behind the ears, or within an inch or less of the scalp.

6. What is the treatment for head lice?

- Most importantly, NEVER initiate treatment unless there is a clear diagnosis of head lice.
- The treatment of choice is over-the-counter *NIX Cream Rinse* - follow the instructions on the product carefully.
- If lice are observed within 7-10 days after application, apply a second treatment and/or consult your doctor.
- Remove remaining nits with nit comb or your fingernail (Your School Nurse can show you how).

7. How can I prevent head lice?

- Parents should regularly check their children's heads throughout the year.
- Girls and boys with long hair *may* want to pull their hair up/back.
- Furniture should be vacuumed. Items that cannot be washed (stuffed animals) can be placed in a sealed bag for at least several days.
- Children should be taught NOT to share combs, brushes, hats.
- All clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with an infested person should be washed and dried on hot cycles.
- Adults should be aware of the signs/symptoms of head lice infestation so the child can be treated promptly – Let your School Nurse know right away!