

## Lice Information Sheet

### What Lice are

Head lice are small insects that live on the scalp and hair of people. They are generally found on the back of the neck (nape) and behind the ears. They are about the size of a sesame seed and can adapt to the color of the hair they are in. Nits (lice eggs) are smaller, silver in color and are attached to the individual hair shaft. Lice feed on the blood of the person's head. They can only crawl, they do not fly or jump. You cannot get lice from your cat or dog. They only live on people.

### Symptoms of Head Lice

More than half of all lice infestations go unnoticed for weeks. They are most active at night so children may complain of not sleeping. Half of all people will have an allergic reaction to the saliva of the louse bite and will experience itching. This is the most common symptom noticed. For some children the itching becomes severe and they can open sores on their heads, for some it will be a rash that develops on the back of the neck.

### Diagnosis

A single louse that is found on a head is an indicated case of lice (infestation). Finding nits (lice eggs) on a head is not an indication of a lice infestation.

### Other Facts

Head lice are often misdiagnosed, if in doubt talk to your healthcare provider

Only 1 out of every 10 cases of lice is transmitted in school.

By the time a student is noticed itching in a class they most likely have had lice for 3 to 6 weeks.

Most cases of lice occur in children ages 3 to 11 years of age.

Lice do not fly or jump.

Lice can only live 1 to 2 days off of a person's head.

Lice DO NOT carry any other disease.

Helmets and headphones are unlikely methods of getting lice. They require hair and a head on which to feed. Lice are equal opportunity pests; they do not discriminate as to whose hair/head they infest as long as it is a person.

THERE IS NO WAY TO PREVENT GETTING LICE.

### Treatment

If live lice are found on the head it is best to call the child's physician. There are many over the counter and prescription medications that will kill lice. It is important to follow all directions carefully. If there are NO LIVE LICE ON A PERSON'S HEAD THEY SHOULD NOT BE TREATED. Lice can develop a resistance to some treatments so it is important not to over treat. (Do not use the same product more than 2 or 3 times.) If the infestation is continuing, make sure to continue to check all family members and only treat those with live lice.

### Follow Up

Once a student has been treated, the student can go to the Nurse's office the next morning to have their head checked to see if there are any live lice and again 1 week later for a recheck. Parents/guardians should continue to comb the student's hair every day for several days to remove the nits.

### Home Care

All hair brushes and combs should be washed in hot water for 5 to 10 minutes.

Sheets, towels and other laundry should be washed in hot water.

Hats, pillows and other items that cannot be washed can be placed into the dryer for 30 minutes on a hot setting.

If there are other items that do not fit in the washer or dryer, they can be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.

Carpets, furniture and mattresses can be vacuumed but lice cannot live on these surfaces.

