

Nurse's Notes
Linda Silvers, RN
Saint Mary School

Head Lice

Welcome back to school. With the start of the new school year, it is important to check your child for head lice. If you detect or suspect that your child has head lice, please contact me. All contacts will be kept confidential. This letter enables us to communicate and educate parents about pediculosis. I have included some websites below that may give you additional information.

The following is how you get head lice:

1. They are spread through close personal contact with another infested individual.
2. They are spread through use of shared combs, brushes, and other grooming aids.
3. They are spread through sharing of hats, caps, wigs, and coats; or through co-mingling of these items at the homes of friends, at school, at church or other public places.

This is what to look for:

1. They are elongated insects about this (--) long and are grayish-white with dark margins.
2. Lice do not have wings and, therefore, **CANNOT** fly. They **DO NOT** jump, but move very quickly; this makes them difficult to find in a child's hair.
3. Since crawling forms are so difficult to see, the diagnosis of head lice infestation is frequently made on the basis of finding nits.
4. A nit is a louse egg.
5. Typically, a viable nit is within ½ inch from the scalp on the hair shaft.
6. Nits are teardrop in shape, about this size (‘), and vary in color from yellowish-brown to white.
7. Head lice attach each nit to a hair shaft with a waterproof, cement-like substance. Thus, nits cannot be washed out or brushed out of the hair like dandruff or other debris that sometimes look like nits to the naked eye.
8. Clusters of nits may be found in any section of hair, but in mild infestations a careful examination of the entire scalp may be necessary to detect them.
9. Your child may complain of an itchy scalp and may scratch to the point of excoriation.

We are requesting that you implement the following practices for your child at home.

1. Inspect your child's hair and scalp **DAILY**.
2. If you see any live lice, treat your child with a head lice preparation. If you have treated your child within the past week, contact your physician.
3. If you see any nits, remove them with the treatment comb or your fingers. As stated above, they are "stuck on like glue" to the hair shaft.
4. If your child has shoulder length hair or longer, we strongly recommend that you tie it back with a ponytail, bun or braids. We should not see loose hair in school.
5. If you have treated your child with OTC pediculocidal agent twice without success, contact your physician.
6. Instruct your child to be mindful in all their group activities of the practices that help prevent a head lice infestation.
7. You may consider limiting or eliminating overnight activities especially when sharing bedding and other activities that may cause head-to-head contact.

The only way to effectively stop this condition is to remove all the nits from your child's hair. We are working with the district to eradicate this situation. If you have any questions, please contact the school nurse.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>