

Interboro School District

Nursing Department

Parents and Guardians often ask for information about head lice. The following information regarding head lice is from the Pennsylvania Department of Health.

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that live on the head and scalp of people, especially children. They are 1/16 to 1/8 inch in length which is about the size of a sesame seed and vary in color from tan to grey/white.

Remember these key points

- Anyone can get head lice
- Lice require blood to live
- Off the scalp, head lice rarely survive beyond two days
- Lice crawl very quickly
- Lice do not jump, fly or hop
- Lice is spread through direct contact, mainly head to head contact
- Sharing combs, brushes, hats, barrettes, etc. can also spread lice
- Pets cannot get or spread human head lice
- Lice is a nuisance but not a health hazard

What are Nits?

Nits are lice eggs that are very tiny and difficult to see. They vary in color from yellowish-brown to pearly white and are teardrop shaped.

- Nits are firmly attached to the hair shaft close to scalp, at the back of the head and behind the ears with a waterproof glue-like substance
- The glue-like substance is so strong that the nits cannot be washed or flicked off with a fingernail
- Nits hatch in 7-10 days and become adult lice 9-12 days

What are the symptoms of head lice?

- Itching
- Tickling feeling of something crawling on the hair
- Scratch marks or red bite marks behind the ears or the back of the neck
- Irritability and sleeplessness because head lice are active at night

Steps to treat head lice

1. Check every member of the family for live lice and nits
2. Treat anyone in the family with **live lice**. Lice killing products are available over the counter at drug stores. Ask your health care provider or the pharmacist what product to use.
3. It is important to follow the label directions on the product **EXACTLY**.
4. Remove all lice and nits with a fine tooth comb or by picking them out.
5. Check hair everyday for at least 14 days for any missed lice and nits and remove if they are present.
6. Repeat treatment according to package directions, usually in 7-10 days, not before this.
7. Remind individuals not to share combs, hair barrettes, hats, scarves, or coats with other people.
8. If lice do not respond to treatment please call your health care provider.

Steps to clean the house

1. Wash all pillows, bed sheets, stuffed animals, and clothing that the individual has used in hot water (at least 130 degrees).
2. Place items in the dryer at the hottest setting for at least 20 minutes
3. Dry clean items that cannot be washed.
4. Place items that cannot be washed or dry cleaned in a tightly sealed plastic bag for 3 -4 days
5. Wash all hair care items in hot water for 20 minutes
6. Vacuum the entire house including rugs, car seats and furniture.
7. After all individual have been treated and the entire house cleaned, the bedding can be reapplied to the beds.
8. Sprays should not be used in the home. The sprays can be toxic.

Resources

Please contact your child's school nurse if you have questions.

- Centers For Disease Control www.cdc.gov/lice/head
- Dr. Richard Pollack's www.identify.us.org
- American Academy of Pediatrics www.aappublications.org
- National association of School Nurse's pediculosis statement www.nasa.org
- PA Department of Health www.health.state.pa.us

