

## Head Lice

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We have several cases of head lice in our schools every year. Please do not be alarmed as this is a common occurrence. Head lice are not a sign of unclean people or homes.

Head lice are tiny insects that live only on people's scalp and hair. They hatch from small eggs (nits) that are firmly attached to the individual hairs near the scalp and cannot easily be moved up or down the hair (as can specks of dandruff). They are white to off-white and teardrop shaped. (see picture). Nits may be found throughout the hair,



but are most often located at the back of the scalp, behind the ears, and at the top of the head. Until a person with head lice is treated, they can transmit them to others.

Anyone who has close contact with a person who has head lice or shares personal items can become infected. Lice are spread only by crawling from person to person directly or onto shared personal items, such as combs, brushes, head coverings, clothing, bedding, or towels.

If your child does have head lice, you must notify your school nurse. Please check with your health care provider who can recommend the best treatment. Everyone in the family should be checked and, if they have nits, they should be treated.

To get rid of head lice:

- Use a medicated lice shampoo recommended by your health care provider.
- After shampooing, remove nits with a special, fine-toothed nit-removal comb. After combing, you may need to remove additional nits manually by sliding them down off of the hair shaft.
- Check for nits daily for the next 10 – 14 days. Treatment may be repeated after 7 days if necessary.
- Check personal items and surroundings:
  - Machine wash all washable and possibly infested items in HOT water. Dry them in a HOT dryer.
  - Put non-washable items (furry toys or pillows) in a HOT dryer for 20 minutes or dry clean them.

- Seal items that cannot be washed or dried in a plastic bag for 10 days (any eggs or lice present will die in this time).
- Soak combs and brushes for 10 minutes or wash them in water and shampoo approved to kill lice.
- Thoroughly vacuum rugs, upholstered furniture, mattresses, car seats, etc.

Your child may return to school as soon as the shampoo has been used and you have removed all of the nits from your child's hair. You and your child must check in with the nurse for a head check before returning to class. Remember that you must continue checking your child's hair for nits for at least 2 weeks.

If you have any questions, please contact me at (508) 234-6221, ext 5110, or call your school nurse.

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School Nurse Leader  
Northbridge Public Schools

Wellness Committee 10/11