

## Head Lice (Pediculosis)

### **Pediculosis:**

It is commonly found in children ages 3-12 years of age. Head lice does not pose a health hazard, nor is it a sign of poor hygiene. Head lice create discomfort by causing itching and irritation. **Direct head to head contact** is the only significant method of transmission. **Lice cannot jump or fly**. Thus, it is rare that transmission by clothing, school bus seats, or chairs can take place. Nits (the eggs from which lice grow) are not transmitted from person to person; therefore, exclusion from school for the presence of nits is not justifiable. The nits may resemble dandruff on the hair, but dandruff may be shaken off, while the nits will stick to the hair. Anyone can get head lice.

### **Treatment:**

Contact your health care provider for suggestions for treatment.

After treatment, thorough combing of the hair, with a very fine-toothed comb, and removal of the nits is essential. If you find lice or nits on your child, all members of the household need to be checked for the presence of lice. **DO NOT TREAT** anyone who is not affected. The treatment will only treat the presence of lice and will not prevent lice.

### **Just the Facts:**

1. The sharing of clothing, bedding, combs/brushes and hats/hair accessories may spread them.
2. Schools are not the most common place where head lice are spread. Sleep-overs among friends and relatives are thought to be a common way they are passed from home to home.
3. School-wide head checks are not recommended. The most effective screening occurs when parents check their own children and treat them as described below.
4. Letters are not sent home routinely regarding cases at school unless there are two or more active cases in a classroom.
5. The “gold” standard of infestation is the direct visualization of live bugs. Contact your pediatrician for Lice treatment options.
6. If only nits or eggs are present, removing them with a special small toothed comb is time consuming, but the most effective way to get rid of them. **DO THIS EVERY DAY UNTIL YOU NO LONGER SEE ANY.**
7. **NEVER TREAT ANYONE** “just in case”. Head lice products can be pesticides, which are toxic if overused and can be absorbed through the skin. If you do need to use them, **FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS EXACTLY.**
8. Shaving or cutting the hair is not necessary.
9. **According to the National Assoc. of School Nurses, children found with live lice should be referred to parents for treatment. One of the biggest challenges is getting parents to communicate the problem to school and to other parents when they find head lice. This may prevent the passing back and forth of this problem. As school nurses, we are your supportive advocate who can advise you about treatments and help you with checking and rechecking as you work to remove nits and lice from your child’s head. We do not judge and we handle lice cases in a confidential manner. Please just ask.**

Visit these links for valuable information and videos: [www.headliceinfo.com](http://www.headliceinfo.com) and [www.cdc.gov/lice](http://www.cdc.gov/lice)

