Head Lice — A General Guide for Parents

There are some things you and your family can do to help to reduce the spread of head lice:

- regularly check your child’s hair;
- teach older children to check their own hair;
- tie back and braid long hair;
- keep a fine tooth head lice comb in the bathroom and encourage all family members to use it when they wash their hair;
- **DO NOT USE** household chemicals (such as kerosene or methylated spirits) to treat head lice.

If head lice are discovered, we will send a note home and put a notice in the school newsletter to remind you to examine your child’s hair. It is only through everyone making an effort at home that you will remove head lice at our school.

As long as head lice management is ongoing, there is no need for students to be sent home or excluded from school.

**Treatment**

There are a variety of treatment options for head lice. Some parents prefer to use a commercial lice treatment (available from your local chemist). These can be effective but you will need to read the label and follow the safety instructions carefully. Generally, treatment must be applied twice (one week apart) to catch all growth stages of the lice. When using a lice treatment, make sure that the heads you treat actually do have head lice and do not treat unless they do! While it is tempting to “do” the whole family, unless they actually have head lice you are really just contributing to lice resistance of treatment products.

**What’s the comb and conditioner method?**

Head lice breathe through small openings along their abdomens called spiracles. By coating hair in something thick and slimy – a hair conditioner is ideal – these openings close over, shutting down the louse’s breathing for about 20 minutes. Although the louse will not die with this method, it does slow it down so that you can catch them.

**Nit busting at home**

Nit busting can be a time-consuming task. Here are some tips to help you when Nit busting with your child:

- Sit your child in a low position in front of you and put on a video or DVD for your child to watch while you work.
- Wrap a towel or kitchen paper around your child’s shoulders to catch conditioner spill.
- Apply liberal amounts of conditioner to the scalp and massage it through all the hair shafts. Lice live close to the scalp, so make sure that you cover the hair shaft close to the scalp. Combing will spread the conditioner onto the rest of the length of hair. Every hair has to be coated to ensure it reaches the lice.
Nit busting at home (continued)

- When the hair is detangled and manageable, use a fine lice comb to comb out each section several times.

- After each comb out, wipe the conditioner on the paper towel. If the child has head lice, you will see them on the towel.

- Keep combing each section of hair until no further lice, nymphs or eggs appear on the paper towel. Often you will see lots of old egg casings that may take awhile to remove.

- Once you have combed and re-combed each section of hair, either re-plait or tie it back.

Useful tips

- Head lice often congregate on the crown of the head.

- A good head lice comb should also remove nymphs, the stage between egg and adult louse—teenagers really. These can be difficult to identify with the naked eye, but appear as small insects on the paper towel.