

Clarksville-Montgomery County School System HEALTH SERVICES HEAD LICE INFORMATION

FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

- Head lice are commonly found behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the head.
- When found, most cases of head lice are already more than a month old.
- Head lice are very small wingless parasitic insects (1/16 to 1/8 inch) that live on the human scalp. They feed on scalp blood, and cannot survive for more than a day without blood. They cannot live on dogs or cats.
- Head lice move by crawling; *they cannot jump, hop, or fly.*
- Head lice are equal opportunity parasites; they do not respect socio-economical class distinctions.
- Head lice are mainly acquired by *direct head to head contact* with an infested person's hair.
- Head lice may infrequently be transferred with shared combs, brushes, hats, and other hair accessories.
- Head lice can also be transferred from person to person via coats, dress-up clothing, furry stuffed animals, upholstered seats (car and theater), and bedding.
- Head lice are heat and light sensitive. They need warmth and do not like light.
- Head lice are not a source of infection or disease; they are simply a nuisance.
- Schools are not the most common places where head lice are spread. Sleepovers among friends and relatives are thought to be a common way they are passed home to home.
- Head lice screening programs in schools do not have a significant effect on the incidence of head lice.
- School wide head checks are not recommended or endorsed by the Harvard School of Public Health or the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics).
- Head lice live approximately 30 days on a human host. A female louse may lay up to 100 nits (eggs), 3 –5 eggs per day. It takes 7 – 10 days for a nit to hatch, and another 7-10 days for the female to mature and begin laying nits (eggs).
- Nits (eggs) 1/4 inch away from the scalp are nearly always hatched or dead.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEAD LICE INFESTATION?

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites.
- Irritability, especially at night.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching.

HOW DO YOU GET HEAD LICE?

- Head to head contact with an already infested person. Contact (touching, especially head to head contact) is common during play and at home or school (slumber parties, sport activities, at camp, and on the playground).
- By wearing infested items, such as hats, coats, scarves, sports uniforms, or hair ornaments.
- By using infested combs, brushes, or towels.
- By putting your head on a bed, pillow, carpet, upholstered seat, or stuffed animal that has recently been in contact with an infested person.

SCHOOL HEADLICE MANAGEMENT

- Space child so they are not touching. Avoid head to head contact.
- Spread resting mats/towels out so they are not touching.
- Have children hang coats and hats separately, or put them in backpacks. Do not pile coats on the floor.
- Instruct children not to share combs, brushes, hair bows, hats, coats, or clothing.
- Students that are seen scratching head (numerous times), send to the clinic.
- Head lice screening(s) by school nurse per Health Services protocol (HEA-F023a).

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- <http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head/treatment.html> - CDC recommendation for treatment
- <http://lacetoleather.com/ridlice.html> - Natural alternative remedies
- It is important to follow the instructions included with any lice treatment.
- With any lice treatment, it is important to comb through the hair with a nit comb and remove all live lice and nits.