

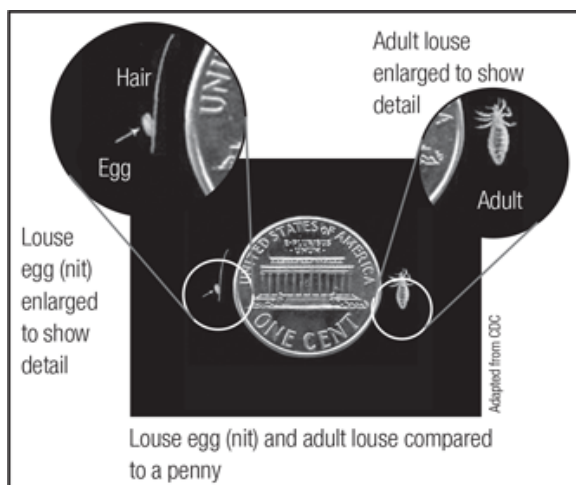
The Need to Know on Head Lice From your school nurse



Head lice continue to be a common problem in schools, colleges and daycares. Lice do not care if the hair is clean or dirty; they can attach to the hair of anyone's head. Assume there are lice in the community at all times of the year! Head lice are not something that will harm your child, but they are pests that can be difficult to get rid of.

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny bugs about the size of a sesame seed. Their bodies are usually pale and gray, but colors may vary. They feed on small amounts of blood from the scalp. They can usually live 1 to 2 days without a host. They lay and attach their eggs close to the scalp in the hair. These shell casings and eggs are called nits. They are small and can be easily confused as dandruff. The best way to distinguish the difference is nits are difficult to remove off of the hair strand. They can live about 28 days. Their life cycle will repeat itself if left untreated.



What to Look For:

-Excessive itching of the head, especially at the back of the neck or back of the ears.

How do you check for lice?

- Sit your child in a brightly lit room
- In one section at a time, look for crawling lice or nits

(Lice like to lay their nits and hang out in the warmest areas, which is at the hairline at the back of the neck or behind the ears)

-Use a fine-tooth comb to search section by section.

What To Do If You Find Nits or Lice

-Notify the teacher, secretary and/or school nurse

-Check all other family members and notify close contacts.

-Treat your child and all household members with lice shampoo/spray recommended by your pharmacist or visit a lice clinic. Follow all instructions carefully!!!!

-Use a nit comb after treatment to remove lice from the hair shafts.

-Wash all bed linens and washable clothing in hot water and dry on high heat & place all non-washable items in a sealed plastic bag for 21 days.

-Vacuum furniture, rugs and floors.

The best defense to prevent lice is frequent screening followed by diligent treatment. Your help in inspecting your child for 5-10 minutes at least weekly throughout the school year for the presence of head lice would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Meghan Bergan, BSN, RN