

The fall and winter is the time of year that we typically see an uptick in cases of head lice (pediculosis). Please do not be alarmed as this is a common occurrence in the community among elementary school children. Lice are spread by **direct** contact with the hair or headgear of a person infested with lice. Lice can only spread by crawling; they do not fly, swim or jump. They may also spread when a person shares items such as combs, brushes, hats, blankets, or pillows with another person with lice. Lice can only survive 24 hours or less away from the scalp. Head lice are not a health hazard or due to poor hygiene and are not responsible for the spread of any disease. Lice are small, tan-colored insects about the size of a sesame seed that lay tiny, pearly gray/brown or white eggs (nits) in the hair. Children with both long and short hair can get head lice.

### **Steps to prevent the spread of head lice:**

Keep clothing and hair accessories (brushes, combs, headbands, hats/ helmets etc) separate from others.

- Check your child at least weekly for head lice, especially when there is an uptick of cases in the community.
- Individuals with long hair might want to keep their hair tied back in pigtails or braids.
- Observe your child for signs of an itchy scalp. Symptoms include lice visibly crawling on scalp and hair and/or nits adhered to hair shaft, tickling feeling or something moving in the hair, itching and scratching on the scalp, sores on the head caused by scratching and/or irritability and trouble sleeping. Eggs (nits) may be glued to the hair shaft close to the scalp. The nits are most often found at the back of the neck, behind the ears, or on the top of the head.
- Check your child's hair for lice or eggs (nits). Nits are tiny, pearly gray/brown or white eggs that often hang in a teardrop shape off the hair shaft. They are firmly attached to the hair shaft and unlike dandruff, are not easily removed.
- Nits and lice are easily seen by the naked eye. Nits are typically no more than ¼ inch from the scalp. Lice are typically darker in color and are about the size of a large sesame seed.
- If you suspect your child has head lice, please contact the nurse at your child's school. This information is kept confidential. Please note letters or emails do not go home to classrooms when a case of lice is reported.
- Please [click here](#) for information on how to treat head lice