

Dear Parent/Guardian;

With the close contact of many children, the school administration is always concerned about how we can best control any outbreak of head lice. This problem occurs not only in our school, but in all schools. Outbreaks seem to occur mostly in the spring and fall, but also after holidays and vacations throughout the year.

Be cautious and be on the alert. Anyone can contract head lice, regardless of personal hygiene or home environment. More girls than boys seem to contract head lice, possibly due to the length of hair. Keeping long hair in braids or ponytails can be helpful. Also, warn your child not to trade or share clothing, hats, brushes, or combs with other children. Please be cautious with the multiple use of helmets during summer sporting events. This could be another source of transfer of head lice.

Examine your child's hair frequently, looking for small white or grayish eggs on the strands of the hair, especially behind the ears and on the back of the neck. They may appear to look like dandruff, but will not brush off. Watch for any increased itching of the scalp.

Your cooperation is most vital in controlling the spread of head lice. If your child gets head lice, you can purchase special shampoos at the drugstore. But please notify the school so we can examine your child's classmates. This helps to control the problem and insure that your child is not re-infested. All cases are kept confidential and we only ask that your child stop in the nurse's office periodically throughout the next three weeks to be sure there has been no reoccurrence. All classrooms with brothers or sisters of an infested child will also be checked.

Often parents are upset when they buy the special shampoo, follow the directions, and send their child to school only to have them sent back home again. We would like to explain why this happens. The shampoo is usually effective against the live louse. It is not, however, 100% effective in killing the eggs. The eggs may then hatch and mature to an egg-laying louse, and the cycle will begin again.

Therefore, since we cannot be sure the eggs are dead, the child may not return to school with eggs in his/her hair. Eggs can only be removed through the tedious steps of combing small sections of hair with the special lice comb or actually pulling each egg off with the fingernails. This is tiresome, but necessary.

When a child is found with lice or eggs, a parent contact is made. Treatment is explained and written instructions are sent home. The child may return to school after the treatment to be checked by school personnel, who will make the determination if the student is to return to class or not. The parent must accompany the child when returning to school the first day after treatment.

We hope this will explain any questions you may have, and hopefully with your cooperation, we can have fewer cases of head lice at school.