

# What Parents/Guardians Need to Know About Head Lice

Any time head-to-head contact occurs, head lice can be spread if one of the persons has head lice.

**It is easier to manage and resolve head lice if they are found early.** Occasional checks of your child's hair, even if you are not noticing symptoms are recommended. Remember, never treat a child with a head lice killing product unless it is clear that head lice are present.

Head lice are found all over the world. Head lice is most common among young children and the household members of children with lice. It is estimated that 6 to 12 million children get head lice each year in the United States.

Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. Head lice are spread by direct contact with the hair of a person with head lice. Cleanliness of people, home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Because head lice are a common and dreaded nuisance that can cause embarrassment to both children and families, it is important to your school nurse that the privacy of students and families is protected.

## **What happens if a child is found to have head lice at school?**

If a student is found to have live lice, parents will be notified but the student can stay in school that day. Head lice have likely been present for at least one month by the time they are discovered and the risk of spreading is very low in the school environment if there is no head-to-head contact. The student may return to school the next day if treatment is completed. The school nurse may decide that the student needs to go home before the end of the day if the risk of passing it to others is higher (e.g. high numbers of lice present, likely to have head-head contact, not following treatment recommendations).

The school nurse or nurse assistant will screen close school playmates, locker partners and siblings. If you find head lice on your child at home, please let your school nurse know so that close school playmates and locker partners can be checked.

## **What can you do to prevent head lice?**

Although nothing can ensure that your child will not be exposed to head lice, there are a few things that may reduce your child's chances of getting head lice: Your child should:

- avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, or camp).
- not share items such as hats, scarves, coats, hair ribbons, combs, brushes, or towels.

**For more information:**

Head Lice (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>

Head Lice Information for Parents (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) at <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/parents.html>

Head Lice: What Parents Need to Know (American Academy of Pediatrics) at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/from-insects-animals/Pages/Signs-of-Lice.aspx>

Head Lice (KidsHealth) at <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/head-lice.html>