

# HEAD LICE FACT SHEET

## Head Lice Information and Facts...

Head lice infestations continue to be a part of raising children today. Head lice are common and are a nuisance but generally are not a health concern. Head lice are parasitic insects found on the human head. They are spread by close head to head contact and by sharing personal items like combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, helmets, clothing, and bedding. Head lice are common where students play and work closely. Occasionally during the school year, some families are faced with an active case of head lice.

All parents are asked to regularly check their student's head for head lice throughout the school year and to inform the school nurse if head lice/nits have been detected.

## Did You Know That...

- Head lice are the size of a sesame seed
- Head lice are gray/brown in color
- Head lice do not jump, hop, or fly but move very quickly
- Head lice lay eggs called nits
- Adult head lice lay about 6 nits per day on the human scalp
- It takes 7-10 days for the nits to hatch
- Nits are tan/off-white in color and look like dandruff
- Nits firmly attach themselves to the hair shaft
- Newly hatched head lice reach maturity in 8-14 days and then begin laying eggs
- Head lice live for about one month
- Head lice can only live away from the human head for 2 days
- Head lice do not live on pets and animals

## What to Look For...

- Persistent itching of the scalp or a feeling of something moving in the hair
- Scratches, sores, or rash on head or back of neck
- An insect about 1/8" long in the hair, most commonly found around the ears and back of neck
- Tan or off-white nits on the hair strands about the size of a flake of dandruff that are firmly attached to the hair shaft
- Visualization of nits and head lice may require good lighting and use of a magnifying glass

## How to Get Rid of Nits...

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a student with only nits and NO live lice, are NOT to be treated with a pediculicide
- Notify your school nurse so assistance can be provided
- Nits should be manually removed from the hair and scalp; nit combs can be used
- The parent/guardian should inspect the hair regularly for 2 weeks for live lice while manually removing all nits
- If live lice are seen, treatment is recommended

## How to Get Rid of Live Lice...

- Apply a lice treatment on hair recommended by pharmacist or health care provider
- Manually remove nits after treatment
- Place combs and brushes in boiling water for 5-10 minutes
- Wash clothing, bedding, towels in hot water and dry on high heat
- Place items that cannot be washed in a sealed plastic bag for 14 days
- Vacuum furniture, car seats, rugs and floors
- Instruct students not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, helmets, etc.
- Check family members for live lice

## Head Lice Management...

To receive optimal control of head lice in our school community, the HCPS School Nurses recommend:

- The primary responsibility for control of head lice rests with the family
- Show due diligence and check your student's hair for lice on a regular basis, especially if they show signs of itching
- Notify your school nurse if you detect nits or live lice
- Continue to teach your student not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, helmets, etc.

Harford County Public Schools has a NO live lice policy. Therefore, students are excluded from school ONLY if live lice are found. Students are to remain in school if only nits are present, under the supervision of the school nurse.