

September is National Head Lice month!

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the human scalp. They are smaller than the size of a sesame seed. They move quickly and can blend in with a person's hair, making them very difficult to see. They lay eggs, called nits, which are small, oval-shaped and usually white-ish in color. They attach to the strands of hair with a glue-like substance, and cannot be simply removed with your fingers, brushing, or regular shampoo.

Lice are spread by direct contact from the head or hair of an infested person. Lice can also be transmitted by the sharing of personal items, and possibly with contact from a pillow, headrest, etc. They do not jump or fly. Lice crawl from a strand of hair to the scalp in order to feed. This is why the scalp gets itchy. Lice and nits are mostly spotted at the base of the neck or behind the ears, but can feed anywhere on the scalp. The signs of head lice include repeated complaints of itchiness and noted head scratching. Head lice cannot be caught from pets. They are human parasites and require human blood to survive.

Please remember: head lice are not caused by poor hygiene. Anyone can get head lice, but they are more common with children. Head lice are annoying, but they can be prevented, *and* treated.

While spreading lice by contact with inanimate objects and personal belongings is uncommon, it can occur, so teach your children not to share combs, brushes, barrettes, hair clips, hats, scarves, helmets, headphones, sleeping bags, pillows, towels, etc., and to especially avoid head-to-head contact with their peers, including the ever-popular selfie!

If you do spot head lice and/or nits, you may call your health-care provider or pharmacist to recommend a special, over-the-counter lice treatment. Ask about the risks and benefits, especially if your child has a chronic illness, or pre-existing medical condition. Follow *all* directions and suggestions to treat, as well as to prevent re-infestation, for your child and family. Effective screening and combing is the ultimate complement to whatever course of action you chose. Please let the school nurse know if your child has contracted head lice. If your child has been detected with head lice in school, you will be contacted to pick up your child for home treatment. The next school day, following the treatment, a parent/guardian needs to accompany the child to the school's health office to be evaluated by the school nurse.

We have had a few reported cases of head lice/nits at the Center School this month. *Please*-all parents/guardians should check their children regularly for head lice and/or nits, *especially* if your child is scratching and/or complaining of an itchy head, for ultimately, it will always be the parent's diligence that makes the difference!

Thank you!