# **Fabius-Pompey School District**

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 Health Offices

# **HEAD LICE**

The focus for treatment of head lice is education and proper treatment, NOT blame. The parent or guardian has the ultimate responsibility to ensure children and free of lice and nits. We are providing this information so that you may take steps at home to monitor and prevent your child from contracting head lice.

**What are Head Lice?**

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp and feed on human blood. Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. Head lice have three forms: the egg (also called a nit), the nymph, and the adult.

**Nits** are lice eggs laid by the adult female head louse at the base of the hair shaft nearest the scalp. Nits are firmly attached to the hair shaft and are oval-shaped and very small (about the size of a knot in thread) and hard to see. Nits often appear yellow or white although live nits sometimes appear to be the same color as the hair of the infested person. Nits are often confused with dandruff, scabs, or hair spray droplets.

A **nymph** is an immature louse that hatches from the nit. A nymph looks like an adult head louse, but is smaller. To live, a nymph must feed on blood.

**Adult**: The fully grown and developed adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has six legs, and is tan to grayish-white in color. Adult head lice may look darker in persons with dark hair than in persons with light hair. To survive, adult head lice must feed on blood. An adult head louse can live about 30 days on a person’s head but will die within one or two days if it falls off a person.

**Who is at risk for getting head lice?**

Head lice are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Sharing clothing (hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms) or articles (hair ribbons, barrettes, combs, brushes, towels, stuffed animals) recently worn or used by an infested person. Or lying on a bed, couch, pillow, or carpet that has recently been in contact with an infested person. Head lice would have difficulty attaching firmly to smooth or slippery surfaces like plastic, metal, polished synthetic leathers, and other similar materials

**Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.**

**Prevention of Head Lice:**

* Examine and treat household members who have had close contact with the infested person.
* NOT sharing combs, hats, scarves, ribbons, or other personal items.
* Avoid physical contact such as hugging and sitting close to the person who has head lice.

**What are the signs and symptoms of head lice infestation?**

* Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
* Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites of the lice.
* Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
* Sore on the head caused by itching.

**How to effectively treat**:

* Use a nit comb only (nit combing can take 2-4 hours)
* Shampoo only when live lice noted
* Follow shampoo manufacturer’s directions exactly
* The 2nd treatment must be done on day 10
* Use hair conditioner to clog lice breathing
* Contact your health care provider if you have difficulty treating

**Common reasons for treatment failure**:

* Misdiagnosis
* Ineffective method
* Lice shampoo used incorrectly
* Resistance to lice shampoo
* Combs/ brushes don’t work- teeth too far apart

**Facts about head lice**:

* 6,000,000 children become infested with head lice every year.
* 4,000,000 adults become infested with head lice every year.
* 10% of the world’s population has head lice at any given time.
* 10-15% of children miss school because of head lice.
* Most head lice are contacted from home, not at school.
* Peak season in CNY for head lice is August.
* **Head lice do not discriminate!**
* Head lice cannot live on inanimate objects.
* Head lice cannot live on pets such as dogs and cats.
* Head lice cannot live in school buses.
* Head lice can run up to 45 mph.
* Head lice only feed on human blood.