

HSISD would like to share some information about **head lice** and what you can do to manage and minimize the spread.



Nit



Nymph



Louse

What are lice?

- Head lice are **tiny gray to brown insects** about the size of a sesame seed that live in the human hair. They *do not carry disease* and *do not fly or jump*, only crawl.
- They lay tiny, **white oval-shaped eggs called nits** and attach them to the hair close to the scalp with a glue-like substance. Although it is hard to see head lice, a person can see the eggs if they look closely. Newly hatched lice are called nymphs. It only takes about 12 days for nymphs to reach adulthood. Adult lice can only live about 28 days, but the females can lay up to 10 eggs a day, starting a new generation of lice.
- Can only live on the human and cannot survive without a human host.
- The first sign of lice is **itching of the head** caused by the bite of the head lice, mainly behind the ears or back of the neck.
- Getting lice has nothing to do with personal hygiene or cleanliness of the home or school.
- **Home remedies** like mayonnaise, petroleum jelly, margarine, herbal oils etc. **have not been** scientifically proven to work.

How do children get head lice?

- Close, head-to-head contact is the primary way lice is spread. However, because head lice are crawling insects that do not fly or hop from head to head, contact must be quite close for the lice to spread.
- Also, sharing brushes, combs, hats or sleeping in bedding that has not been treated is a likely way for them to spread.

How to check for head lice:

- Under a bright light, in an area where you can easily examine the head from different angles, part the hair and look at the scalp. Nits will look like small white or yellow-brown specks. They will be firmly attached to the child's hair. Live lice will move quickly away from the light.
- You may need to use a magnifying glass. It's often difficult to tell the difference between dandruff or other hair debris. However, dandruff is much easier to comb out of the hair while nits are much harder to remove.

Treatment

- Use an **over-the-counter FDA- approved shampoo** treatment that you can find at the grocery or drug store. Follow the directions on the package exactly.
- Remove as many eggs as possible with a special **comb** that comes with the head lice treatment.

- **Treat your home** at the same time as you treat your child. Do the following:

Soak combs and brushes for 5-10 minutes in some of the lice shampoo or for 1 hour in very hot water.

Wash sheets, blankets, pillows, stuffed animals and other bedding in the hottest setting of water in the washing machine. **Dry** in a hot dryer.

Non-washable items like huge stuffed animals or large comforters can be **sealed** in a plastic garbage bag for 1 week or tumbled in a very hot dryer.

Vacuum furniture, carpets, car seats and mattresses thoroughly. An over the counter spray is also available to spray on the above items to kill lice and comes in some of the over-the counter lice kits.

Treat the hair for a second time in 7-10 days after the first treatment to make sure you kill any lice that may have hatched from eggs that might have been missed during the combing.

There is no need to cut the hair. Live lice like to crawl on short hair just as much as long hair.

Please **check all members of the household** and treat each accordingly.

More detailed information can be found on websites such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control (CDC).