

## **HOW TO CHECK FOR HEAD LICE**

Lice seem to be presenting a bigger and bigger problem these days as they are becoming successfully resistant to current medications on the market. This makes identifying it early and preventing an infestation in your home or classroom even more critical. Head lice are crawling insects. They cannot hop, jump or fly. Eggs are laid on hair strands close to the scalp. They are dandruff size but unlike dandruff they are attached to the hair with a glue like substance.

- **Have your child sit with you standing over them in a very well lit area. This is very important**
- Check your child when they have a clean, dry scalp or during and after blow drying their hair. Blow drying their hair helps to lift the hair up and away from the scalp to make the health check easier, but it is not imperative to ensure a proper inspection. A clean scalp is very important as any specks of dirt or sand become suspect.
- Move small sections of hair up and away from the scalp, one at a time, and beginning at the crown of the head. Inspect the scalp and hair for anything obviously alive. Live lice move very quickly away from any light source so observe closely. Hatchling lice can be very tiny, like a speck of dirt. If you see a speck, gently scratch to see if it moves. Removing the speck and placing it on a piece of white tissue will allow you to see if it is an insect. Adult lice are ~ 1/8-1/4" (~size of a sesame seed), tan to grayish-white in color and oval shaped. They have legs and no wings, as they do not fly. The live lice generally stay close to the scalp, but they can move throughout the scalp as well.
- As opposed to live lice you may find nits (lice eggs). These adhere to the hair shaft like glue and are generally very close to the scalp. They are difficult to remove vs. a speck of dirt which moves when scratched. They are difficult to see so look very carefully.
- Continue in an orderly fashion covering all areas of the scalp, including the bangs, and paying special attention around the ears and the back of the neck, as that often is the first area affected.
- After completing this inspection, repeat it in a quicker fashion. This is a double check, as the lice are so fast that if missed the first time, hopefully the second time through will find them.

The time required for the check will vary depending on the length of hair, and also on the color-live lice are easier to spot in blonde hair, but the nits are extremely difficult to spot in blonde hair. Take your time, be thorough. As you get more comfortable with doing the check, it will not be as time consuming. Daily combing or brushing does not constitute an adequate health check.

If you find lice or eggs (nits), every member of your household should then be checked. A pediculicide shampoo is available over the counter or by prescription from your healthcare provider. This special shampoo will kill the lice if the directions on the bottle are followed carefully. After shampooing the nits must be removed by combing and picking through the hair and scalp. This is a very time consuming but necessary process.

**Children should be checked daily at home when there is a lice alert in effect at school. It is good practice to check your child's hair 2 or 3 times a week even when there is no alert, as it is a difficult problem to rid your house of, and the sooner it is caught and treated, the better. Please do your part to put an end to the problem.**

**Regional School District No. 16 has adopted a no-nit policy.** If your child has been diagnosed with head lice, upon returning to school your child **must** report to the school nurse with an adult before being allowed to return to the school setting. Please do not send the child on the bus.

For more helpful information go to [www.chesprocott.org](http://www.chesprocott.org) (in the healthy communities section) for how to check for head lice and how to treat the child and your home.