

Dear Parents:

Head lice infestations in children attending daycare and in school-age children are **VERY** common in the United States. Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene, and all socioeconomic groups are affected. Head lice infestation is not influenced by hair length or frequency of brushing or shampooing. Head lice are NOT a health hazard. Head lice are parasitic insects that live on the scalp. Head lice do not hop, jump, or fly. They crawl from one person to another by direct contact and by use of infested articles. Lice can only survive 1 to 2 days away from the scalp, and eggs cannot hatch at a temperature lower than that of the scalp.

At this time, we are requesting all parents to inspect their families for lice and treat as appropriate. If you discover that any member of your household has active lice or nits (eggs), follow the instructions found under "Treatment" listed below. Mass screenings are not recommended by the Texas Department of Health or the American Academy of Pediatrics. Studies have found that mass screenings increase the potential for lice phobia and tend to increase the prophylactic use of pediculocides (lice shampoos). PLEASE DO NOT TREAT YOUR CHILD UNLESS YOU FIND LIVE LICE.

Signs and Symptoms of Head Lice:

- a. itching and scratching of the scalp, especially at the nape of the neck and above the ears
- b. finding live lice (about 1/16 to 1/8 inch long) or nits on the hair shaft Nits are shiny, grayish-white, and look like dandruff, but won't "flick off." The closer the nit is to the scalp, the newer the infestation is.

Treatment:

- a. Treat PROMPTLY if you find lice.
- b. Use the treatment of your choice. Pediculocides can be obtained over the counter at grocery stores or pharmacies. Prescription treatments are also available from your doctor.

FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS EXACTLY ON ALL TREATMENT PROGRAMS.

- c. After using the pediculocide, remove nits (eggs). Nits can be removed by combing the person's hair with a nit comb. Remove the more stubborn nits with your fingernails. There are also products available which help loosen the dead nits after treatment with a pediculocide. This makes it easier to remove the nits.
- d. Wash all clothes, coats, hats, sheets, blankets, pillows, and hair ornaments in very hot water. Stuffed animals are also a source of reinfestation.
- e. Keep re-inspecting your child's hair every 2-3 days for the next 2 weeks.

To Help Prevent Head Lice:

- a. do not share hats or coats
- b. do not share batting helmets, combs, brushes, barrettes, or other hair ornaments
- c. wash clothes before wearing if someone else has worn the clothes
- d. common places for exposure include: camps, playgrounds, slumber parties, sports activities and school.