

## Head Lice Exposure

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**Your child may have been exposed to head lice.** Lice are a common childhood nuisance and should not be a cause for alarm. However, parents may want to check their child's head for the next two weeks to see if their child has contacted lice after the exposure.

### What are lice?

Lice are small parasitic insects that live on human heads. They obtain their food by biting into the head. This causes intense itching. Female lice lay their eggs (nits) on the hair shaft. It is important to note that lice do not carry any diseases. If left untreated, skin infections can occur from the head scratching.

### What are the symptoms of head lice?

The most common symptom is a persistently itchy scalp, especially behind the ears and in the back of the head. Upon checking the head, one may see actual bugs which crawl and do not fly, or nits (eggs). Nits are the small silvery eggs attached the hair shaft. They will not move up and down the hair shaft, as they are fixed to the hair shaft. If anything that appears like eggs move, then they are not nits, most likely dandruff.

Nits alone do not indicate a diagnosis of head lice. To confirm head lice, one must find actual live bugs in the hair. If you are not sure if your child has lice, the school health staff can check your child. **Do not treat your child unless you are sure that the child has live lice.**

### What is the treatment if head lice are discovered?

If you find lice in your child's hair, please call the school health staff and they can recommend treatment for you. Treatment involves the child and the home environment. All three steps as listed below are important.

1. Your child needs to be treated with an insecticidal louse shampoo. After this, the hair must be combed with a lice comb to remove dead bugs and nits.
2. The home environment must be treated by vacuuming. Bedding, clothes and personal care items must be washed.
3. Your child's hair needs to be combed and checked **daily** until no live bugs are found for **two weeks**. Depending on the severity of the case, a second shampoo treatment may be given.

Even though treatment is outlined here, please call the school staff so actual treatment can be discussed. Each school has different return to school policies for students.

Please call the school health staff for any further question or if more information is needed. Thank you for your support of school health.

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Akron Children's Hospital School Health Services staff

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Phone

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Date