



# Humble Independent School District Health Services

## Pediculosis Fact Sheet

Children are naturally affectionate. They share personal items such as caps, helmets, combs, brushes, etc. They forget that in sharing these items they also may share head lice! Hair should be checked regularly for lice and nits.

Head lice can be found in anyone's hair. It is not a sign of poor health habits or being dirty. Head lice can occur at any age, in any ethnic group, and to either sex. It doesn't just happen to "other people". It is important to learn how to recognize it, how to treat it, and how to prevent it from occurring again.

Head lice are tiny insects that live in human hair. They hatch from small eggs, called nits, which are attached to the base of individual hairs. The eggs hatch in about seven to ten days, with the new lice reaching maturity in about two weeks. A head louse will **not** survive for more than 24 hours away from its human host. Since head lice multiply rapidly, they should be treated promptly.

Head lice can be transmitted in several ways -- by playing "head to head", or sharing personal items such as combs, hairbrushes, hats, ribbons, scarves, or other head coverings. It is important to remind your children of the reasons for not sharing these items.

Having live bugs (lice) requires the student be excluded from school. The presence of only "nits" does not require exclusions from school unless they are closer than ¼ inches from the scalp.

### WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

- ◆ Nits attached to human hairs
- ◆ Persistent itching of the head and back of neck
- ◆ Infected scratch marks or a rash on the scalp

Sometimes, small white specks in the hair such as dandruff can be confused with nits. Nits, however, are very difficult to remove while dandruff will brush away easily.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR TREATMENT AND CONTROL OF HEAD LICE AND NITS

1. Use a lice shampoo. Follow the directions **EXACTLY**. Many lice shampoos contain pesticides. There are "natural lice shampoos" that are free of pesticides that are also affective.
2. **No product kills 100% of the nits, so manual removal is very important.** It is important that nits be removed. Many lice shampoos have combs included to perform this function. Lice shampoo has little effect on the nits; therefore, manual removal is necessary. Having nits does not prevent school attendance.
3. Household disinfecting should be carried out at the same time as the child's hair treatment.
  - a. Soak combs and brushes for 10 minutes in lice shampoo.
  - b. Wash bedding and clothing in very hot water. Items that cannot be washed can be put in a dryer at the hottest setting the fabric can tolerate or pressed with an iron, or the items can be bagged for 10 days.
  - c. Vacuum carpets, upholstery, pillows, and mattresses including car seats, backpacks, and stuffed animals.
4. Treatment should be repeated in 7 to 10 days; check shampoo instructions. This is important so any new eggs that may have hatched after the first shampoo can be killed before they reach maturity.
5. There is no need to cut hair.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL YOUR SCHOOL NURSE.**