

Dear Kolter families,

BE ALERT FOR THE SIGNS OF HEAD LICE: Head lice are one of the nuisances that parents of school age children occasionally find themselves dealing with. Lice do not transmit disease and any one can get them. It is not a matter of hygiene. The most common sign is intense itching on the back of the neck and head. If you observe your child scratching in this area, check his/her head for nits attached to the hair shafts. The eggs of head lice are called nits. The tiny yellowish white or grayish white nits are shaped like a tiny teardrop speck. The female attaches the nits to the hair shaft, close to the scalp with a glue-like substance that makes it nearly impossible to remove. Ordinary combing, brushing, or shampooing will not detach them.



INSPECT: Examine the hair and scalp of all family members regularly throughout the year. That means checking adults as well as children that live in the same house. Pets do not carry human lice and do not need to be examined. Lice are small grayish-tan, wingless insects. Close inspection of the hair and scalp will sometimes reveal the adult lice, but you are more likely to see the nits.

TREAT: If lice are found, or your child has been excluded from school because of a lice infestation, there are treatment options available. Over-the-counter shampoo treatments, called pediculicides can be used. Directions must be followed carefully. Keep in mind these shampoos are pesticides and some children will not tolerate them well. There are also local services available that will treat your child without pesticides. Your pediatrician is the best resource if you have specific concerns. After the treatment and the hair is dry, the nits may be removed with a special nit comb. ***Lice treatment is a job for an adult.*** Do not ask your child to do this if you really want to be sure of effective treatment. Just remember this: one remaining nit that hatches will soon lay eggs and you'll have to go through the whole procedure again. **Parents should check their child's head daily for the next 14 days to ensure lice have been eliminated. *If you do not do this step, nothing else matters!***

CLEAN UP THE ENVIRONMENT: Lice are spread from one person to another by sharing articles, such as combs, brushes, towels, pillows, and hats. Wash all lice-exposed clothes, towels, and bed linens. Dry in a hot dryer if possible. Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 10 minutes. Items which cannot be washed (e.g., stuffed animals) can be sealed in a plastic bag for 10 days. Vacuum carpets, upholstery, pillows, mattresses, and car seats which have been exposed to persons with head lice. Don't allow untamed hair. Have long hair placed in braids and pony tails. Following all of these environmental measures is the best method of preventing re-infestation of lice.

***Individual head checks are performed on an as needed basis at school. Routine classroom lice checks will not be initiated. Data from The Texas Department of State Health Services and American Academy of Pediatrics show that this practice disrupts classroom time and is not effective in controlling the spread of lice.

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