

MESSAGE FROM THE CLINIC

With fall campouts and overnight field trips starting up, remember that it is a time when students can pick up unwanted visitors - head lice!

Head lice are insects that are dependent on a human host for survival. They cannot jump or fly; they can only crawl. Therefore, they only spread to others by head-to-head contact and rarely contact with inanimate objects that a person with lice has had worn or used, such as bedding or clothing. An adult louse can only survive for 48 hours without a human host, and eggs (nits) will die within a week if not kept warm by the human head. However, a single louse can lay many eggs, so it is important to catch them early in order to stop the breeding cycle and prevent a severe case.

The best intervention for lice is frequently checking your child's head, especially after sleepovers and campouts. In addition, I recommend checking your child's head once a month. Look for adult lice, which are greyish brown and newly hatched lice, which look like small, black cinders. Also, look for very small sesame seed-shaped eggs glued to the hair shaft around the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Lice are very small and are often hard to see with the naked eye. To check your child, wet the child's hair and put enough conditioner to saturate the entire head. This will slow the movement of the insects as it hinders their ability to crawl. Comb through the child's entire head from root to tip with a fine-tooth lice comb. After each comb stroke, rinse the comb in a white bowl or plugged sink. If lice are present, you will have very small dark insects visible in the white bowl. You can confirm your findings with a magnifying glass. If you find lice in the bowl, treat the child.

See below for tips on prevention and treating of head lice, and please let the clinic know if you discover lice so we may step up preventative measures in the classroom to keep it from spreading.

Prevention:

- Encourage your children not to have head-to-head contact with peers
- Don't wash hair as frequently - lice like clean hair
- Have girls wear hair up or in a braid
- Use a lice-protective product in your child's hair (rosemary, tea tree)
- Don't share sports helmets, baseball caps or hair accessories
- Check your child's hair before and after sleepovers and campouts

More information:

- CDC lifecycle: [Read the info](#)
- Is it head lice: [Watch the video](#)
- Combing for head lice: [Watch the video](#)
- What do lice and nits look like: [Watch the video](#)

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