

Town of Fairfield School Health Program

Treating Head Lice Infestation

THE NURSE WILL AGAIN CHECK YOUR CHILD'S HAIR FOR SIGNS OF REINFESTATION IN 7 TO 10 DAYS. SIGNS OF REINFESTATION INCLUDE FINDINGS OF NITS WITHIN ONE-QUARTER INCH FROM THE SCALP OR LIVE HEAD LICE.

Please return the attached form to the school nurse after your child has received treatment.

Follow the steps below to treat head lice infestation

1. Check every member of the family.

Look closely through the hair and scalp for lice or their nits. Finding a louse may be difficult; there are usually few of them and they can move quickly. Look for nits on the hair shafts, especially at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Nits may be removed with a special comb designed for that purpose.

2. Consult with your child's physician regarding treatment.

Home remedies for treating lice infestation, such as mayonnaise or petroleum jelly, and various commercial preparations based upon mixtures of essential oils, salts, or other "natural substances," are not scientifically proven to work. *Never* use unapproved chemicals such as pet shampoos, gasoline, or kerosene.

3. Remove Nits.

Nit combs, which are fine-toothed combs may be used to remove nits and lice from the hair shaft. Check, comb, and remove nits and lice from hair every 2-3 days.

When removing nits, part the hair into sections. Select one section at a time to work on and start at the top of the head in the section you have picked. Hair should be cleaned and well-combed or brushed to remove tangles before attempting to use a louse comb. Clean the louse comb frequently to remove any caught lice or eggs. It may require several hours each night for several nights to tackle the problem. An entertaining video may help keep the child occupied during this exercise. Sit behind the child, and use a suitable bright light (and magnification if available), to inspect and comb through the hair, one small section at a time. Repeat until no more active lice are observed.

4. Keep checking household members.

Only infested persons should be treated. Check household contacts for lice and nits every 2-3 days until the problem is resolved. Contact your child's physician if lice or nits persist.

5. Treat the home environment.

Machine wash all washable clothing, towels and bed linens that the infested person used during the 2 days before treatment. Use the hot water cycle (130 degrees) to wash clothes. Dry laundry using the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.

Clothing and items such as stuffed animals and hats that are not machine washable must be dry cleaned or stored at room temperature in a tightly sealed plastic bag for at least two weeks.

Combs and brushes should be cleansed by soaking them in hot water above 130 degrees Fahrenheit for 5 to 10 minutes

Vacuum anything that can't be washed such as, the furniture, carpets and your child's car seat. Because head lice don't live very long away from the scalp, you don't need to use lice spray on these items. Do not treat pets since head lice do not live on pets.

- Sources: 1) U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services Centers for Disease Control & Prevention
2) American Academy of Pediatrics 1997 Red Book
3) Head Lice Resource Kit: *A Guide for School Nurses* (Warner-Lambert & The National Assoc. of School Nurses)
4) *Head Lice Information statement from Richard J. Pollack, Ph.D.*, Laboratory of Public Health Entomology, Harvard School of Public Health. <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>