

Lice Policy

Lice do not pose any immediate health risk and do not indicate a lack of cleanliness. In addition, when managed correctly it can be eliminated completely in a timely manner.

Lice can be identified as having 6 legs, tan to grayish white in color, and are about the size of sesame seed. The ones I've seen are darker in color than I originally imagined they would be. Lice need a blood source to survive so you will find them near the scalp. The usual places are near the ears or nape of the neck. They have been found elsewhere too so check your child's entire head. Nits (lice eggs) will not flake off. You will literally need to pull it off the hair shaft. They are usually a brownish, grayish nodule. They will vary in color – the ones I have seen are gray with a pearl iridescent shine. I cannot emphasize enough how small these nits are – it's tough to see them if you check too quickly. They usually latch on to the hair follicle at the tip – it looks like a tear drop hanging from the follicle. Lice cannot jump or fly. However, I have seen a live louse in action and they latch onto a hair follicle very quickly. They know where their 'food' comes from! Itching may also be noted; however, this is a later symptom.

I recommend you check out the website healthychildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics) for detailed information on head lice. This site recommends you check with your child's doctor before beginning any head lice treatment. In recent years, there have been new over-the-counter medicines plus prescription medication made available to help combat the head lice issue. The most effective way to treat head lice is with head lice medicine. After each treatment, using the comb-out method every 2 to 3 days for 2 to 3 weeks may help remove the nits and eggs. Thorough cleaning of your home and vehicles is also recommended.

While new studies now state it is not necessary to remove every single nit from your child's head, those who have dealt with head lice state that nitpicking is the key to getting rid of the problem. It is a very slow process and needs to be repeated daily until the nits are gone. Find a good light source, wet your child's head down with water (easier to see the nits on a wet head), and slowly comb his or her hair in sections with a metal lice comb. Remember the nits will not flake off – you need to physically remove each and every one you find.

In order to reduce the number of children affected it is recommended that you encourage your child not to share personal items such as combs, hats, or other clothing with other children. It is also proven by the American Academy of Pediatrics that careful parental inspections of a child's head are more effective than mass school screenings. I would advise you to check your children on a weekly basis. Take time to **carefully** check your children's scalp.

If untreated nits or live lice are detected on a student, the parent will be notified. The student will be sent home for treatment.

Three other websites with more information are health.state.mn.us, Identify.us.com, and mnllicelady.com. If you have any more questions pertaining to head lice, please contact me at the school, 392-5621.

Sincerely,

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