



PORT WASHINGTON-SAUKVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

We educate all children to reach their greatest potential.

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Dear Parent/Guardian;

We are aware that head lice is a common concern for families of school-age children. While it is uncomfortable to have and to deal with, head lice is very common and is really more of a nuisance than a medical concern. Anyone can get head lice, it has nothing to do with cleanliness. The management of this problem is a team effort. Head lice are passed from person to person by direct contact or on shared objects (hats, towels, combs, blankets, stuffed toys, etc.) They cannot jump or fly and move only by crawling. There is not cause for fear, guilt or anger. Pets cannot become infested with head lice and do not spread them. Unfortunately, there is no way to "lice-proof" the school, your child, or yourself. The best tactic for combating head lice is early detection and thorough treatment.

We recommend that you spend 15 minutes checking your child for head lice. Lice can appear in different stages: eggs and empty egg shells (nits), baby lice (nymphs), and adult lice. Nits are tiny, teardrop shaped, and appear yellowish-white in color. Live nits are found $\frac{1}{4}$ inch to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the scalp and are often concentrated around the ears or the nape of the neck. They can look like dandruff but unlike dandruff, they will be very difficult to move. Adult lice have 6 legs, are tan to grayish-white and are about the size of a sesame seed. They can be found throughout the hair. If you spot even a single louse, your child needs to be treated. Please begin treatment as soon as possible and then send your child back to school the following day so that they do not miss learning opportunities in the classroom. Also, remember to check everyone in the household and treat anyone that has live head lice and/or nits within $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the scalp. Following this letter is a sample treatment schedule to help you formulate the best plan for your household.

If you find evidence of head lice on any member of your household, initiate treatment as soon as possible and make sure to treat all infected people at the same time. There are several types and brands of medicated shampoos commonly used to treat head lice. Ask your pharmacist or physician for a specific recommendation for your child. If you are treating someone under 2 or someone with allergies or asthma, be sure to tell your pharmacist or physician as the treatment recommendation may be different. Apply head lice treatment according to your physician's instructions or the manufacturer's product label instructions. Have your child put on clean clothes after treatment.

After treatment with the medicated shampoo, it is important to comb and/or manually remove the eggs (nits) from the hair. Sit behind your child in a well-lit room and comb through the hair, one section at a time. Use a fine-toothed nit comb. These combs can be found at most stores that sell head lice shampoo or may come with the shampoo itself. Your child's hair should be clean, wet, and well combed or brushed before using the louse comb. Conditioner may be used to lubricate the hair. Divide the hair into small sections. Comb through each section until no more nits or lice are observed. Clean the comb frequently with a paper towel to remove any nits or lice. Ideally, each individual should have their own nit/lice comb.

There are many types of alternative treatment methods such as essential oils, food oils, mayonnaise, salts, Vaseline, etc. The effectiveness of these treatments is unclear. Do not apply household insecticides (i.e.

Raid) or other chemicals not specifically labeled for treating head lice on people. Well-intentioned parents treating their children with toxic substances have caused serious injuries. Because it is easy to burn the hair and scalp, caution must be exercised.

To aid in the effective removal of all head lice and reduce the risk of re-infestation, personal articles must also be treated. Clothing (including jackets, hats, scarves, and pajamas), towels, bedding, and any washable toys should be washed in hot (130°), soapy water and dried on high heat for 30 minutes. Pillows and other items that cannot be washed can be put in the dryer on the hottest setting for 30 minutes or longer. Soak combs, brushes, and barrettes in hot (>130°) water for at least 5 minutes or Lysol, rubbing alcohol, or a lice-killing chemical for at least 1 hour. Floors, rugs, upholstered furniture, and car seats should be vacuumed and the vacuum bag discarded when complete. Other articles that cannot be washed or vacuumed may be dry cleaned or sealed in plastic bags for at least 10 days to destroy lice and eggs. These steps are time-consuming but can help effectively eliminate head lice. Lice in the environment (not on the head) will die within 1 – 2 days and the eggs generally cannot live much longer. Head lice cannot survive without a host. Using household insecticides to treat the home, vehicles, carpets, or furniture will unnecessarily expose your household to harmful chemicals. Therefore, “fogging” with insecticides or spraying the environment is not recommended.

Please see the provided sample treatment schedule for a 14 day plan to help rid your child and household of head lice. Additional information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>.

Sincerely,

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District Nurse

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