

As your child's school nurse, we want to welcome your child back to school for what promises to be a productive and exciting new school year. We also want to make you aware of a medical problem that impacts schools around the country, usually this time of year when students reconvene for classes.

Pediculosis, or head lice, is a condition that each year affects approximately six to 12 million children between the ages of three and 12 years of age, and about one in every 100 elementary school children. Head lice are parasites that are generally found on the scalp, around the ears, and at the back of the neck. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, and can be a reddish brown color. Eggs, or nits, are smaller and silver in color.

Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and they do not transmit disease. Transmission from one child to another can occur during direct contact or sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes, caps or helmets.

The most common symptom of head lice is head scratching, particularly at night, although red bite marks may also be noticed. If you suspect that your child has head lice, he or she should be examined by your health care provider or school nurse. Nit picking with a fine-tooth comb along with safe and effective products are available, both over the counter and by doctor's prescription, to treat this problem. It is important to follow the directions carefully. Parents should also wash in hot water or dry-clean all recently worn clothing, hats, used bedding, and towels. Personal care items such as combs, brushes and hair clips should also be washed in hot water.

Our goal is to provide you with the information you need to safeguard your child's health, and ensure that his or her education is not disrupted, but remains the most positive experience possible. We hope you find this information useful, and we send best wishes to your child for a rewarding school year.

For a healthy school,

Tina Rawn, RN
Marcia Gibbons, RN



This notification made possible by the National Association of School Nurses and Sciele Pharma, Inc., a Shionogi company.