



McHenry Elementary School District 15

1011 N. Green Street, McHenry, Illinois 60050

Lice Lessons

We know students may come to school with head lice. Information is the key to prevention and we would like to share a few fun facts about a not so fun topic.

Did you know?

Close quarters can contribute to the spread of lice? In the World War I trenches, lice were rampant and soldiers cropped their hair short to avoid the “cooties” -a term thought to derive from the Malay word “kutu” or biting parasite.

In general, the incidence of head lice is increasing in our country. An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States, most commonly among children ages 3 to 11. If a lice infestation hits your home, you are not alone. I am including this information to help you learn how to identify lice and provide information on what you can do to treat lice.

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp. They feed on blood. The eggs, also called nits, are tiny, tear-drop shaped eggs that attach to the hair shaft. Nits often appear yellowish or white, and can look like dandruff but cannot be removed or brushed off. The nymph, or baby louse, is smaller and grow to adult size in one to two weeks. The adult louse is the size of a sesame seed appears tan to grayish-white. An itchy and inflamed scalp is a common symptom of lice. Although not common, persistent scratching may lead to skin irritation and even infection.

Who is affected by head lice?

Head lice are not related to cleanliness. In fact, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits. Infestations can occur at home, school or in the community. Head lice are mostly spread by direct head-to-head contact—for example, during play at home or school, slumber parties, sports activities, or camp. Less often, lice are spread via objects that have been in recent contact with a person with head lice, such as hats, scarves, hair ribbons, combs, brushes, stuffed animals or bedding.

How do I check for head lice?

Under a good light, separate all of the hair, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck using a toothpick. If dandruff is found, it will loosen easily when rubbed with the stick. If nits or lice are found, please inform the school. I can provide you with specific information on what to do if an infestation occurs in home.

Remember...

Make it part of your home routine to check your children regularly.

As your school nurse, I want to provide you with the information you need to safeguard your children’s health. I hope you find this information useful. Our district website has up to date information on how to deal with head lice under the [Health Services Department resource tab](#).

I am here to help you in any way I can. Head lice can be a very “hairy” situation for all of us. Watch for Lesson number two with what to do when an infestation occurs along with other “lousy” facts.

Have a Happy and Healthy School Year!
Nurse Amy