

# From the School Nurse...

MAMARONECK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT  
School Health Services



## EXPOSURE NOTICE

### HEAD LICE

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

A case of head lice has been found in your child's class. Head lice affect more people than other childhood communicable diseases, not including the common cold. But like a cold, when children come in close contact with each other, it is easy to pass along head lice. Shared hats, clothing, brushes, pillows, headbands and other personal articles are perfect vehicles to transfer lice from one person to another. It is important to act immediately to prevent the spread of lice to other classmates and to you and your family as well.

Head lice are small, only about 1/16th of an inch long. They are grayish-white with dark edges. They cannot jump or fly, but they can move very quickly. That's why it is difficult to find them in a child's hair.

Diagnosis of head lice is generally made when lice eggs (nits) - which are fastened to the hair shaft - are clearly evident. The gold standard for diagnosing head lice is finding a live louse on the head. This can be difficult, because the louse can crawl 6 to 30 cm per minute. A child who is scratching his/her head often is another telltale sign. Nits are teardrop in shape and are fastened to the shaft of the hair about 1/4 inch from the scalp. They are very small, only about 1/32nd of an inch long, and are best seen with a magnifying glass under natural light. They seem "glued" to the hair and cannot be brushed or combed off like dandruff. Clusters of nits may be found in any section of the hair, but they are more apt to be behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.

Head lice only survive on humans and do not affect family pets. To eliminate head lice and nits from your home, follow the directions on the back of this memo.

#### Prevention:

- 1) Teach your child that he/she should not share hats, combs ( or pillows at sleep-overs) with siblings or friends.
- 2) Periodically check your child's head for nits.

**(over please)**

## WHEN YOUR CHILD COMES HOME WITH HEAD LICE.....

**DON'T PANIC!** Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with cleanliness, nor does it reflect on you as a parent. The problem is easily eliminated. Simply follow these instructions:

1. **EXAMINE YOUR CHILD'S HEAD** to be sure you know what the nits look like. They are tiny, grayish-white eggs attached to the hair, near the scalp, especially behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. If a whitish speck cannot be dislodged with a Q-tip, it is probably a nit.
2. **CHECK OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS** to see if they are infested. All household members should be checked for headlice, and only those with live lice or nits within 1 cm of the scalp should be treated.
3. **USE AN EFFECTIVE HEAD LICE TREATMENT.** Your pharmacist or physician can recommend an effective pediculicide product. Follow the directions exactly as prescribed being sure not to leave the shampoo on the head longer than stated. When used as directed, it will be very effective at killing head lice. Because 20 to 30% of the eggs remain viable after treatment, a second treatment 7 to 10 days later is necessary to kill newly emerged lice hatched from eggs that survived the first treatment.
4. **REMOVE THE NITS (LICE EGGS).** Because no pediculicide product kills all the eggs, it is recommended to remove all traces of nits (especially the ones within 1 cm of the scalp) to prevent them from hatching and having a re-infestation. A special comb for this task is usually provided with the treatment product.
5. **WASH ALL CLOTHES, BED LINENS, TOWELS AND OUTERWEAR** in hot water and dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items that cannot be safely washed, such as stuffed animals, should be dry cleaned or stored outside of the home for two weeks in a sealed plastic bag. This is because adult lice can survive for 48 to 55 hours at room temperature without a host.
6. **CLEAN COMBS AND BRUSHES IN HOT, SOAPY WATER.** Water should be at least 130 degrees F, and it is advisable to let combs and brushes soak for at least 10 minutes.
7. **VACUUM EVERYWHERE** to make sure your home is free of lice. Vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture: anything that might hold lice. Do a thorough job and discard vacuum bags promptly. Include car upholstery!
8. **PLEASE INFORM THE PARENTS** of your child's playmates and friends with whom you car pool so that they may check their children's heads.
9. **WHEN YOUR CHILD RETURNS TO SCHOOL AFTER TREATMENT** please accompany him/her to the school nurse's office.

