

Head lice

The Facts of Lice

- Lice are tiny insects, the size of a sesame seed.
- Lice love clean human hair.
- Lice do not jump or fly.
- Lice bites make the scalp itchy.
- Nits are lice eggs, which are attached to the hair, close to the scalp. They are as tiny as dandruff.
- Adult lice lay about 10 eggs (nits) that take 7-10 days to hatch.
- Lice are spread by head-to-head contact or by sharing brushes, hats, or other items that contact the head.
- Lice do not cause disease....they just bug us!
- Head lice are common where children play or work closely together

Prevention of Head Lice

- Check your children for lice if they are scratching their head or if a friend or classmate has head lice.
- Teach your child to not share hats, brushes, helmets, hair barrettes and towels.
- Keep long hair tied back when lice have been identified in your school.

Checking for Lice

You will need a normal comb (a metal nit comb may also be helpful), hair clips for longer hair and paper towels.

1. Untangle long hair using a normal comb.
2. Comb the lice comb through the hair close to the scalp and then wipe on a paper towel. Look at the paper towel for lice.
3. While doing this, look at the hair near the scalp for nits. These tiny white or yellow eggs attach to the hair; you cannot blow them away.
4. You must look through the entire head. Use hair clips to hold longer hair in place.
5. If you find lice or nits, remove them using the lice comb, your fingernails or by cutting the strand of hair. Place lice/nits in a bowl of hot, soapy water. Flush down the toilet when finished. Follow one of the recommended treatments for lice.

Guidelines for Head Lice Management

Head lice are an on-going problem in today's society. They are not a major public health concern in that they do not spread disease. They become a community concern because of the nuisance and discomfort surrounding infestations and spread. To achieve optimal control of head lice in the community:

- The primary responsibility for control of head lice rests with the family and community.
- Trained volunteers can assist families and the community by providing routine head lice screening and parent education.
- Public health nurses provide training for volunteers and offer consultation to parents and the community (i.e. schools, facilities) on the management of head lice.
- If a child is found to have head lice, the child can continue to have contact with others for the remainder of the day. The parents need to be informed so that they can commence treatments as soon as possible.

Children should not be excluded from the community or school due to head lice. If difficulties arise due to treatment failure, caregivers and/or parents are encouraged to consult a public health nurse for information and resources to support the child's prompt return to the community or school.

(For more information on head lice and treatment visit Fraser Health at www.fraserhealth.ca)