



Dear Parent,

This letter is to inform you about head lice. The information contained in this letter was referenced from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website (<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html>).

The head louse is a tiny parasitic insect that is found on the head, and infrequently on the eyebrows and eyelashes, of people. Head lice feed on human blood several times a day and live close to the human scalp. Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. They hold tightly to hair with hook-like claws at the end of each of their six legs. Head lice *nits* are lice eggs laid by the adult female head louse at the base of the hair shaft nearest the scalp. Nits are cemented firmly to the hair shaft and can be difficult to remove even after they hatch and empty casings remain. They are oval-shaped and very small (about the size of a knot in thread) and hard to see. Nits are often confused with dandruff, scabs, or hair spray droplets. Head lice nits usually take about 8-9 days to hatch. Eggs that are likely to hatch are usually located no more than ¼ inch from the base of the hair shaft. Nits located further than ¼ inch from the base of the hair shaft may very well already be hatched, non-viable nits, or empty nits.

Contact with an already infested person is the most common way to get head lice. Head lice are most often spread by direct head-to-head contact with the hair of an already infested person. Head-to-head contact is common during play at school, at home, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, and camp).

Spread by contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels) used by an infested person is uncommon. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1-2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the scalp.

Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice. Head lice are not known to spread any disease and therefore are not considered a medical or public health hazard. Head lice can be an annoyance because their presence may cause itching.

Head lice infestations can be asymptomatic, particularly with a first infestation or when an infestation is light. Itching ("pruritus") is the most common symptom of head lice infestation and is caused by an allergic reaction to louse bites. It may take 4-6 weeks for itching to appear the first time a person has head lice.

Other symptoms may include:

- a tickling feeling or a sensation of something moving in the hair;
- irritability and sleeplessness; and
- sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores caused by scratching can sometimes become infected with bacteria normally found on a person's skin.

You should examine your child's head, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck, for crawling lice and nits if your child exhibits symptoms of a head lice infestation. If crawling lice or nits are found, all household members should be examined for crawling lice and nits every 2-3 days. Persons with live (crawling) lice or nits within ¼ inch or less of the scalp should be treated.

For more information regarding lice go to the CDC website (<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html>), or visit the School District of Greenfield's home page <http://www.greenfield.k12.wi.us/Parents/HealthOffice/tabid/27818/Default.aspx>, click on Health Office under the Parents tag, then click on 21 Surprising Things You Might Not Know About Lice.

Note: In the event a student has been diagnosed as having live lice or nits the District Nurse screens all the students in the infected student's classroom for lice.