# PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF VERONA, NEW JERSEY
## Medical Department

## HEAD LICE PREVENTION TIPS

## AT HOME

Educate your children about lice. Explain that it is not a good idea to share their friends' combs, hats, bows, or helmets.

Take 10 minutes per week to check your child's scalp for lice and nits. Check more regularly if your child has recently attended a special event: a birthday party, a slumber party, a children's movie, an activity involving helmets, an overnight camp.

If there are cases of lice in your child's class, check you child's head daily for at least 3 weeks.

Do a special screening before the first day of school, and before returning from school vacations.

Don't share combs, brushes, pillows or head gear. Label a brush for every family member.

## AT SCHOOL

Art smocks are being returned to be washed. Please return them to school in a bag with your child's name.

Instruct your children not to share helmets, hats, headphones, brushes, smocks or clothing in school.

## DURING EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Purchase your own helmets for sports activities (baseball season is a popular time for head lice!).

Remind your children to put their coats in their backpacks at their after school activities. Instruct them never to throw their coats or sweatshirts in a pile. Place any change of clothes in a closeable bag.

If you are hosting a party, avoid games with masks, hats, dress-up clothes, or blindfolds.

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## **HEAD LICE:** Detection, Treatment, and Prevention

## What are head lice?
Head lice are tiny wingless, grayish-tan insects that live and breed in human hair. The eggs, called nits, are easier to see than the lice themselves and are usually found attached to hair shafts close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the head. Nits cannot be washed away like dirt or dandruff; they must be removed with a special comb designed for that purpose. Head lice can only survive for about half a day without a human host and cannot live on family pets.

## How do they spread?
Head lice are very contagious. They are spread through the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes, scarves, hats, sleeping bags, and stuffed animals. They also crawl from head to head when children are in close contact. To minimize the risk of repeated outbreaks, remind your children not to share these items.

## How are they detected?
The first clue that a child has head lice is frequently scratching of the scalp. To check for infestation, carefully examine the hair around the back of the neck and behind the ears. You may only see the eggs (nits), small whitish ovals of uniform size attached to the hair shafts.

## How are they treated?
Head lice infestation can be treated with a head lice medication called a pediculicide. There are several pediculicides on the market, and they come in a variety or forms: shampoo. crème rinse and lotion which can be purchased over the counter. Look for a treatment that kills the nits as well as the lice and offers protection from reinfestation. There are also other treatments available that do not involve the use of pediculicides. Please consult your pediatrician for recommended treatment.

## What is the school's role in the prevention and control of head lice in children?
Because a child with an active head lice infestation has likely had the infestation for a month or more by the time it is discovered, he or she should be allowed to remain in class, but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others. The child's parent or guardian should be notified of the infestation that day by telephone or by a note sent home with the child at the end of the school day. The parent or guardian should be advised that prompt proper treatment is in the best interest of the child and his or her classmates.

Other children in the school who were most likely to have had direct head-to-head contact with the infested child should also be checked. Classroom or school-wide screening has not been proven to be necessary or effective at controlling the spread of head lice.

## Where can I get more information on head lice?
- Your health care provider
- Your local health department
- American Academy of Pediatrics – www.aap.org
- National Association of School Nurses – www.nasn.org
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention – http://www.cdc.gov

# 7 STEPS TO HEAD LICE CONTROL

Head Lice continue to be a problem in our community. If your child comes home with head lice, don't panic. Playing with others, a simple exchange of hats, clothing, combs, and other personal items can lead to the transmission of lice from one person to another. Head lice are highly contagious and may be difficult to control. However, you can have your children free of lice by using the following steps to eliminate an infestation and prevent reoccurrence.

**1. INSPECT - EXAMINE HEADS:** Lice are small insects, about the size of a sesame seed and white or light brown in color. Carefully examine hair and scalp of all family members for lice and their eggs (called nits).

**FIND NITS:** Nits can be easier to locate than lice. They are yellowish-white in color and oval shaped. Nits are glued to the side of the hair shaft and can be found throughout the hair, especially at the back of the neck, behind the ears, and at the top of the head. Use a magnifying glass to help find lice and nits.

**2. TREAT:** You may treat all family members or limit treatment to those found to have lice or nits. Whichever approach is chosen, all treatments should be done at the same time. Carefully follow all label directions. Consult your physician for recommendations for lice control products.

**USE A NIT COMB:** Most lice control products come with a plastic nit comb. Slowly comb all hair to remove nits. For best results all nits must be removed. Nits not removed may turn into crawling lice in 7-10 days.

**3. CLEAN UP ENVIRONMENT** - The use of a lice control spray is NOT necessary.

**WASH:** Launder washable clothing and other items used recently by the infested persons in hot water. Wash bed linens, pillow cases, blankets, scarves, towels, etc. Soak all brushes and combs in hot water for 10 minutes. Dry clean clothing that cannot be machine washed or hang it in a storage bag for 14 days.

**VACUUM:** Thoroughly vacuum rugs, upholstered furniture, mattresses, pillows, stuffed toys and other items used recently by the infested persons. Items may be sealed in a plastic bag for 14 days to ensure that no lice survive.

**4. REINSPECT/TREAT AS NEEDED IN 7-10 DAYS**
Re-inspect for lice and nits on the 10th day after treatment or as directed.

**5. SIGNS OF A SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT**
No lice will be seen and no new nits will be laid. When first laid, nits are attached to hair near the scalp. As the hair grows, they are moved away from the scalp. By 10 days after a successful treatment, no nits will be closer than 1/4 inch from the scalp.

**6. IF TREATMENT FAILS**
Be sure that label directions were followed closely. If lice reappear within 10 days after treatment, perhaps not all nits were removed. Re-treat with a lice control product and remove nits with a nit comb.

**7. WAYS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF HEAD LICE**
Do not use personal items that belong to others i.e. combs, brushes, hats, etc.