

Dear Parent or Guardian:

This letter is to inform you that an individual in your child's class has head lice. Though bothersome, head lice will not harm children nor adults, nor cause illness nor transmit diseases.. Having head lice does not mean a person is unclean or has poor hygiene or the environment is dirty. Head lice are almost always transmitted from one person to another by head-to-head contact but also from sharing hats, helmets, brushes and other personal items.

Pediculosis, or head lice, is a condition that each year affects approximately 6 to 12 million children between the ages of 3 and 12 years of age. This is about 1 in every 100 elementary school children. Head lice are parasites, which are found on the scalp, around the ears, and at the back of the neck. The adult louse is the size of a sesame seed and can be the color of your child's hair. Eggs, or nits, are smaller and silver in color. Common symptoms of head lice include itching, and head scratching, especially at night.

Head lice are tiny insects that live only on the human head. Lice hatch from eggs, otherwise known as nits. Nit color ranges between white to brown. Nits are typically found around the ears and along the nape of the neck. Nits will hatch after seven days. Once hatched, the nits are known as nymphs and within ten days, become adults. Nymphs and adult lice can be found on the head and feed on human blood to live. An adult female louse can live up to 30 days and lay 5 eggs a day.

Please do your part to prevent the spread of this communicable condition by checking your child(ren) daily for the next few weeks, and on a regular basis thereafter. Lice infestation is much easier to treat if caught early. Examine your child's head and everyone else in the household for lice and nits. Start examining the head by beginning around the ears and at the nape of the neck and then the rest of the head. If your child does have lice, begin treatment.

Treatment consists of over-the-counter products and combing. Please check with your pharmacist for the product that will best suit you. Cook County Health Department recommends NIX (permethrin) or RID and other pyrethrin-based products. It is important to read and follow the treatment instructions carefully. Please check with a healthcare provider before treating an infant or pregnant woman. Combing the hair with a lice comb alone is an effective method. Lice combs can be purchased at pharmacies. The preferred lice combs have close, long metal teeth that pass through hair easily. Using both treatment methods together is very helpful in removal of lice and eggs from the head.

Continue to check your child's head and members in the household daily for one week after lice treatment. Comb out any eggs that may have been missed. Wash dirty clothes, coats, hats, bedding and towels as you normally would. There is no need to bag household items.

If your child develops head lice, it is a courtesy to notify the parents of children with whom he/she has had recent contact. Stopping the problem as early as possible is a key to effective treatment and prevention of additional spread. Please consider how you would feel if the parent of a classmate or friend withheld this information from you.

If you have further questions concerning head lice, please consult with your healthcare provider or Cook County Health Department.

Sincerely, Koraes Office Staff