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### What Are Lice?

Lice are very, very small insects. In fact, they are so tiny that you can barely see them! Each **louse** (the name for one of the lice) is brown and gray and only about the size of a sesame seed.

Lice need to be next to skin to survive and the warmth of the skin is a perfect place for them to live. Once Lice find their way to human hair, they lay eggs, or **nits**. Lice can survive up to 30 days on a person's head and can lay eight eggs a day. Lice attach their eggs (nits) to pieces of hair, close to the scalp. If you see a small, oval blob on a strand of hair, that's probably a nit. If these little eggs are yellow, tan, or brown, the lice haven't hatched yet. If the eggs are white or clear, the lice have hatched and what you are looking at now is the shell. Look for moving or Live Lice!

Although they don't hurt, lice sometimes can irritate the skin and make it itchy (especially at night). Too much scratching can lead to scalp infections. Do not confuse dry scalp or dandruff with nits or live lice, they are not the same thing. You can't "shake off" nits or Live Lice, you have to pull them off.

### At school:

- Identify students with signs of head lice infestation.
- Notify school main office and/or school nurse of the suspected case.
- Provide parents/guardians a list of care options (see Head Lice Letter), including referral for secondary infection, if suspected. Avoid transmission of live lice by instructing students to never share headgear, combs or brushes, and to avoid head-to-head contact.

### Procedure:

- A student who is found with nits may remain in school and in class until the end of the day. Discretion should be used regarding individual cases. Students should be discouraged from close head-to-head contact with others.
- Notify parent/guardians of the infestation. Provide parent/guardian information on the care options for treatment.
- Notification letter with treatment options should be sent home with student.
- Siblings and close contacts of a student with live lice should be examined.
- Remember to keep the student's identity confidential as to avoid undue embarrassment.
- **The student may return to school after parent/guardians have treated the student and no live lice are found on inspection.**
- The student will be re-examined by school staff periodically for 8-10 days after returning to school to assure that there are no more live lice. The parent/guardian should be asked to continue to check at home and continue to remove nits.
- When there is evidence of an OUTBREAK in a classroom (such as two students with no close contact except at school, within a consecutive 2-week period) the whole class should be screened by trained staff.
- In chronic infestations, the school staff may offer extra assistance to provide practices to prevent the spread of lice. This could be the fostering of good personal hygiene practices: possibly combing out nits at school if parent agrees and student is cooperative in order to ensure free and appropriate public education and reduce absences.

For more information about head lice and treatment recommendations, please check out the following websites:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Pests/Lice>

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

<http://www.livescience.com/34732-head-lice-prevention-treatment.html>

### The Definition of School Nursing

School nursing is a specialized practice of professional nursing that advances the well-being, academic success and life-long achievement and health of students. To that end, school nurses facilitate positive student responses to normal development; promote health and safety including a healthy environment; intervene with actual and potential health problems; provide case management services; and actively collaborate with others to build student and family capacity for adaptation, self-management, self-advocacy, and learning (NASN, 2010)