

Re: Possible Head Lice

Dear: Parent or guardian of: (student name) _____

As your child's school nurse, I'd wanted to alert you that your child visited my office today with evidence of head lice. An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States, most commonly among children ages 3 to 11, so you are not alone.¹

Head lice are not dangerous. They do not transmit disease, but they do spread easily.¹ **It is important to talk to your family physician or pediatrician to get appropriate care.** A few things to consider include:

- All household members and other close contacts should be checked, and those with evidence of an active infestation should also be treated at the same time.⁵
- There are a number of available treatments, including new prescription treatment options that are safe and do not require combing out nits from your child's hair.
- Resistance to some over-the-counter head lice treatments has been reported. The prevalence of resistance is not known.^{2,3}
- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.⁴
- Family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels should be washed in very hot water.⁵
- Personal articles such as combs, brushes and hair clips should also be washed in hot water if they are in contact with a person with head lice.⁵
- This letter must be completed and returned to the school before your student is allowed to return to school.

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live close to the human scalp. They feed on human blood. The eggs, also called nits, are tiny, tear-drop shaped eggs that attach to the hair shaft. They are often found around the nape of the neck or the ears. Nits may appear yellowish or white, and can look similar to dandruff. But, unlike dandruff, they can be difficult to remove. Nymphs, or baby lice, are smaller and grow to adult size in one to two weeks. Adult lice are the size of a sesame seed and tan to grayish-white.¹

As you and your family deal with this uncomfortable but common issue, keep in mind that head lice infestations are not related to cleanliness.^{6,7} In fact, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits.⁷ Infestations can occur at home, school or in the community. Head lice are mostly spread by direct head-to-head contact—for example, during play at home or school, slumber parties, sports activities, or camp. Less often, head lice are spread via objects that have been in recent contact with a person with head lice, such as hats, scarves, hair combs, brushes, etc.^{1,7}

I am here to help you in any way I can. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can answer any questions or provide you with additional information.

_____ Student Name

Has been treated for pediculosis (head lice) with _____ (Name of shampoo or treatment)

Parent Signature

Date treated

¹ Centers For Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head Lice: Frequently Asked Questions. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html. Accessed November 20, 2013.

² Burkhart CG. Relationship of treatment-resistant head lice to the safety and efficacy of pediculicides. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2004;79(5):661–666.

³ Meinking TL, Serrano L, Hard B, et al. Comparative in vitro pediculicidal efficacy of treatments in a resistant head lice population on the US. *Arch Dermatol.* 2002;138(2):220–224.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head lice: Treatment Frequently Asked Questions. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs_treat.html. Accessed November 20, 2013.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Head lice: Treatment. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>. Accessed November 20, 2013.

⁶ Meinking T, Taplin D, Vicaria M. Infestations. In: Schachner LA, Hansen RC, eds. *Pediatric Dermatology*, 4th ed. Mosby Elsevier; 2011:1525-1583.

⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Head lice: Epidemiology and Risk Factors. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/epi.html>. Accessed November 20, 2013.