

318-1 Appendix Parent Awareness Letter - Head Lice

Head Lice Awareness

(SCHOOL)

(DATE)

Dear Parent:

When children return to school, sometimes an old problem returns. Lots of young people in close contact make it easy for head lice to spread. Head lice are not related to a lack of cleanliness, and are just as commonly found in clean hair.

What are lice?

Head lice are small, grayish or brown insects that live and breed in human hair. They cannot fly or jump, but can move very quickly from one head to another during direct head to head contact. Lice move freely on the shaft of hair but cling so tightly that brushing, combing, and washing with regular shampoo will not remove them. This is different than dandruff, as dandruff is not attached to the hair and can be easily brushed off.

Adult lice lay eggs, called nits, on the shaft of the hair. A nit is small, oval-shaped, grayish-white in colour and firmly attached to the hair. Adult lice may bite the scalp, which causes intense itching.

How can I detect if my child has lice?

To detect head lice, carefully examine hair close to the scalp. Look closely at the back of the head close to the neck and behind the ears. Look for nits. Adult lice will be difficult to see as they move quickly and avoid light.

What do I do if my child has lice?

If your child has lice, contact Health Link at 811 or visit your local pharmacist for information on treatment. Contact families with whom your child has had close contact. Remember, if lice have spread from your child to his/her friend, your child could get lice again from their friend after treatment.

Please take a few minutes now to check your child/children for head lice and to talk them about how to avoid getting lice.

How can I help my child reduce the chance of getting lice?

- Don't share personal grooming items (brushes, combs, hair barrettes etc...)
- Don't share towels, headphones, sleeping bags, hats, scarves, pillows and stuffed animals.
- Use your own hangers at school. Do not leave clothes in piles – clothes that are piled stay warm and lice can move freely in the pile
- Children with long hair should consider tying or braiding it, especially if an incidence of lice is occurring in their school.
- Teach your child how to avoid a head to head contact

Routinely check your school children for head lice every two weeks during the school year. If you have any questions, please call Health Link at 811 or your local public health nurse for more information. Further information on head lice can be found at www.MyHealth.Alberta.ca

Sincerely,

Principal