

**CANNON FALLS AREA SCHOOLS**  
**Health Office**

*Dear Parent/Guardian: There is a child in your child's class who had head lice.*

**HEAD LICE**

Head lice infestations are a common problem for children in childcare settings and schools. Anyone can get head lice. Head lice are very small, tan-colored insects (less than 1/8" long) that live on human heads and lay their eggs (nits) close to the scalp. These nits are tiny (about the size of the eye of a needle) and grey or white in color. Check your child(ren) for head lice. If you find lice or eggs, follow the suggested treatment and prevention plan provided below.

**CAUSE:** *Pediculus humanus capitis*, a louse.

**SYMPTOMS:** Itching of the scalp and neck. Look for: 1) crawling lice in the hair, usually few in number; 2) eggs (nits) glued to the hair, often found behind the ears and at the back of the neck; and 3) scratch marks on the head or back of the neck at the hairline.

**SPREAD:** Lice are spread by direct head-to-head contact and by sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, barrettes, hats, scarves, jackets, blankets, sheets, pillowcases. Lice do not jump or fly; they crawl and can fall off of the head. Head lice do not live longer than 48 hours off the head. They only lay their eggs while on the head. Nits found more than 1/2" from the scalp are usually dead or empty and will not hatch. The eggs do not hatch if they fall off the head. Lice do not spread to or from pets.

**INCUBATION:** It takes 7 - 10 days from when the eggs are laid until they hatch.

**CONTAGIOUS PERIOD:** Until treatment with a lice-treatment product results in no live lice.

**EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL:** Until treatment is completed and no live lice are seen. Nits must be removed (by combing through hair). Your child will be re-checked by the School Nurse in the Health Office upon his/her return to school.

**PREVENTION/CONTROL:**

*(see back of this form)*

## HOW CAN HEAD LICE BE CONTROLLED?

1. Do not share combs, brushes, other hair-grooming items and other hair care items (barrettes, etc.), towels, bedding, clothing, hats, and headgear, such as head phones and sports helmets.
2. Hang coats, jackets, and caps in individual lockers or on assigned coat hooks. If this is not possible, put the clothing in separate plastic bags.
3. Check your child's head frequently throughout the year. If one person in a household, childcare setting, school, etc., has head lice, all others should be checked, too.
4. Clean all combs, brushes, and other hair grooming items and accessories (barrettes, etc.) by:
  - soaking in the treatment product for 10 minutes, or
  - cleaning with hot soapy water, or
  - boiling for 5 minutes.
5. Vacuum Carpets, upholstered furniture, mattresses, and seats in the car(s) thoroughly. Insecticide sprays are not recommended due to exposure to unnecessary pesticides.
6. Clothing worn in the last three days (jackets, hats, scarves, pajamas, etc.), bedding, and towels should be washed in hot (130°F or higher) water and dried in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes before being used again. Clothing that cannot be washed or dried (e.g., linens and stuffed toys) can be dry cleaned or sealed in plastic bags for two weeks.

### 7. Treatment:

- Use a lice treatment product (shampoo or crème rinse).
- Follow the product directions carefully regarding:
  - **amount of product to use**
  - **length of time on the hair**
  - **whether to use on dry or damp hair.**
- A second treatment is recommended with certain products, 7 to 10 days later to kill any lice that may have hatched after the first treatment. If you use a prescription medication, discuss this with your healthcare provider. More than two treatments are unnecessary and could be harmful.
- Removing the nits is recommended for controlling the spread of head lice. The nits are glued onto the hair shaft as they are laid, making them difficult to remove. In order to remove the nits, use a nit comb, flea comb, or your fingernails to slide eggs off the hair shafts, or use scissors to cut the hair shafts that have nits glued to them.
- Treat only household members who have evidence of head lice. In order to eradicate the infestation of head lice, all household members who have head lice should be treated at the same time.