



## FOXBOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Foxborough, Massachusetts 02035

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**Dear Parents,**

**This letter is meant to inform you that a case of head lice has been reported or detected in your child's classroom. We strongly encourage each parent to check their child's head today and continue to check them every few days for the next three weeks. Per the National Association of School Nurses, "It may be appropriate to screen other children who have had close head-to-head contact with a student with an active infestation, such as household family members, but classroom-wide or school-wide screening is not merited (Andresen & McCarthy, 2009)."**

**Please take a moment to review the following information.**

The subject of head lice is not a popular one, but their presence affects millions each year. Despite their negative association, they are present in people from every socioeconomic bracket. Having head lice has nothing to do with cleanliness, nor does it reflect on you as a parent.

When children come in close head to head contact with each other, it is easy to pass head lice along. Shared hats, clothing, brushes, pillows and other personal articles are perfect vehicles to transfer lice from one person to another.

We would like to ask your assistance in following these steps to try to prevent their spread to other classmates and family members:

1. Watch for signs of frequent scratching.
2. Check your child's head regularly.
3. If you detect lice or nits, follow the treatment described below.
4. **Please report all cases of lice to the appropriate school nurse.**
5. **Upon return to school, any child diagnosed with lice will need to come directly to the nurse's office so that they can be checked and cleared for school. Once your child returns to school he/she will have a weekly follow up with the nurse to check for ongoing issues.**

### **How to check for lice:**

Head lice are small, only about 1/16 of an inch long. They are grayish-white with dark edges. While they cannot fly and do not jump, they move quickly. Diagnosis of head lice is generally made when lice eggs (nits) are evident. The nits are teardrop in shape and are "glued" to the hair shaft, close to the scalp. They cannot be washed or brushed out like dandruff. They are more apt to be found behind the ears and at the nape of the neck, although they can be anywhere on the head. Examine your child's head in good light, when you are not in a rush.

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**Treatment:**

1. Treat hair with a lice killing product or **alternative treatment\***. Check with your doctor or pharmacist for a specific product to use, and the procedure to remove the nits.
2. **THOROUGHLY** comb the hair with a nit removal comb, available at the pharmacy. Removal of nits is important to avoid reinfestation. A nit loosening rinse is also available at the pharmacy to make the job easier. The “old fashion” nit loosening rinse is a rinse made of vinegar and water.
3. Wash all clothing, bed linens, pillows, towels, stuffed animals, coats, hats, etc. in hot water and dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items that cannot be safely washed should be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for a minimum of 2 weeks.
4. Clean all combs and brushes in hot, soapy water. Let soak in hot water for 10 minutes.
5. Vacuum everywhere to make sure your home is free of lice (carpets, mattresses, upholstered furniture). Do a thorough job and discard the vacuum bag promptly.
6. Check all other family members to see if they are infested. If they are, treat them also.
7. Explain to your child that this is very common. While it is a nuisance to treat, **THE CHILD HAS DONE NOTHING WRONG**. Hopefully, with time and education, we can eliminate the negative stigma associated with having head lice.
8. You should **retreat** with a lice killing product or alternative treatment for a **second** time approximately 6-7 days after the initial treatment. Not following through with this step could lead to a second round of hatching lice.

\*An *alternative treatment* would be to completely saturate the head with olive oil or 100% real mayonnaise (not low-fat or fat-free) and then wrap the head with saran wrap or cover with a shower cap. The head should remain wrapped for at least three hours, preferably overnight. Wash the hair then proceed to removal of lice and nits. **Combing is the key to removing nits!!!!!!** A special lice and nit removal comb is necessary. Some are better than others, so feel free to call the nurse for recommendations. It is recommended that you thoroughly comb your child’s hair (section by section) for the first few days....approximately 30 minutes both days. After that, you can proceed to an every four day combing schedule for three week’s time (approximately 10 minutes of combing each combing day).

Head lice only survive on humans and do not affect family pets. **To eliminate head lice, follow the above instructions.** Doing a thorough job will prevent their spread at home and in school.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact one of us. Thank you for your cooperation.

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