

ROCHESTER SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

To: All Parents/Guardians of Rochester School Children

From: The Rochester School Nurses

In order to keep head lice under control, **parents must be checking the children's hair weekly year round.** At the elementary-level, we will check the children's hair during the first month of school and thereafter in those classes where there has been a suspected problem. Head lice can only be controlled with the help of all the parents. Those people who have close contact with the child should be notified (i.e. relatives, friends, childcare works, neighbors etc). **The school nurse should be notified. Students may return to school when they have had satisfactory treatment. Your child's school nurse will discuss with you when you can send your child back to school.**

Children playing in close contact or a simple exchange of hats, clothing, brushes, combs, pillows and other personal articles can transmit head lice from one child to another. If your child has come home with head lice, don't panic. You will need to treat this condition but head lice will not create a medical emergency.

Lice can be effectively treated. Medication to treat head lice can be obtained without a prescription. Treatments can be found at most any store. If the over the counter treatment you have used seems ineffective, you should call your doctor for further advice.

1. EXAMINE HEADS

Lice are small grayish-tan, wingless insects. You may not see the lice because they move very quickly. You're first sign will usually be the lice eggs (nits). A rash may be noticed on the back of the neck. You may notice the infected person scratching their head frequently or they may complain of an itchy scalp.

2. DETECT NITS

Nits are firmly attached (unlike dandruff that can be easily brushed away) to the hair shafts, close to the scalp. Nits are much easier to see and detect than the louse. They are small white or dark specks, which are usually found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears however they are not limited to those areas. Lice like to lay their eggs in warm areas.

3. TREATMENT

Once head lice and/or nits are found, you will need a medication to kill the lice. Follow the instructions on the bottle label carefully. After hair has been treated, the nits **must be removed** with a special nit comb or by using your fingers. **The nits will not be washed away or fall out by themselves. Nits left in the hair may hatch and result in reinfection.** Carefully discard the eggs. Nits and lice can survive in the environment for some time. After the initial treatment, you will need to check your family daily for 4 weeks. If you see any nits or lice after one week you should retreat.

You will need to disinfect your home. Household items that may have been in contact with the infected person's hair need to be cleaned. Items that can not be washed can be put in a hot dryer for 20 minutes or dry-cleaned. Other items such as stuffed animals should be put in an airtight bag for at least two weeks. Lice will not spread to or from your pets. All people should avoid borrowing personal items -- combs, brushes, hats, towels or clothing -- from each other or from friends. Children in school should put their hats in the sleeves of their coats and make sure their coats are hung up in the closet or locker.

With continual attention year round from you at home and us at school, the problem should be kept under control. If you have any questions or would like more information about this communicable condition, please call you child's school nurse.