

Head Lice and Bed Bugs

Head Lice Information Letter for Parents

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Occasionally students in school have lice. While lice are a nuisance, they do not spread disease. Research shows that children are more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from students at school. Teachers from time to time ask their school nurses to educate parents on signs of head lice that can begin with a child complaining of their head itching therefore the purpose of this letter is to share information on lice in general.

Lice can be difficult to see because they are small and move quickly. You are more likely to see the eggs (nits) that lice have laid, especially behind the ears and at the back of the neck. A nit is about the size of a pinhead and is shaped like a tear drop. Nits can vary in color and are tightly “glued” to a single strand of hair resembling dandruff flakes. Nits cannot be washed or brushed out. Keep in mind that not every child with lice complains of his/her head itching.

If you discover that your child has lice, please try not to panic because there are lice shampoo treatments available. Follow the directions carefully because most lice treatments must be repeated in 7-10 days after the first shampoo treatment (follow manufacturer’s instructions precisely). One popular over-the-counter product is Nix which contains the active ingredient of permethrin. Your healthcare provider can also write or call in a prescription shampoo. Please let your school nurse know if you find lice. **Health Services has prepared a Head Lice Information sheet to help you be successful in treating head lice and can also be found on the DPS Health Services webpage.**

Dayton Public Schools will continue to monitor any child with lice. We are following the best practice guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Ohio Department of Health, and the National Association of School Nurses.

If you have any questions regarding lice, please contact your child’s school nurse.

Thank you!

Health Services

Head Lice Information

Facts to know:

- ◆ Head lice is a common problem among young children.
- ◆ Although a nuisance, it is not a serious condition and can be successfully treated
- ◆ Children are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from other students at school.

How head lice are spread:

- ◆ By direct head to head contact with a person who has head lice.
- ◆ By sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, scarves, jackets, sweaters, towels, sheets, pillowcases, blankets, etc.

What to look for:

- ◆ Itching of the scalp that does not go away. Keep in mind that not every child with lice complains of his/her head itching.
- ◆ Head lice are tiny, grayish-white insects that cannot fly or jump, but can move quickly by crawling.
- ◆ Sometimes lice are difficult to find but are commonly seen in hair behind the ears or at the back of the neck.
- ◆ Small whitish lice eggs (nits) are easier to see but can vary in color. A nit is about the size of a pinhead and is shaped like a tear drop. Nits are tightly “glued” to a single hair shaft and resemble dandruff flakes. Nits cannot be washed or brushed out and are often found behind the ears and at the back of the neck.

How to get rid of head lice:

- ◆ Choose an over-the-counter (i.e. Nix) lice shampoo or by having your primary care provider write or call in a prescription shampoo.
- ◆ Remove ALL nits (eggs). This is very important and you should inspect your child’s hair every day for two weeks to ensure that all nits are removed. Special nit combs are helpful to remove nits. You must comb all nits from your child’s hair. This requires a good light source such as lamp or sunny window. Nits can also be removed by running your finger and thumb down the hair shaft because the nit combs may not remove all the nits. Hair needs to be combined in small sections. Pin the hair up after each section of hair is cared for. Removing all nits requires lots of patience.
- ◆ Follow the directions carefully because most lice treatments must be repeated in 7-10 days after the first shampoo treatment (follow manufacturer’s instructions precisely). Some treatments are applied to dry hair. Do not re-wash the hair for 1-2 days after the lice treatment has been given. Have your child put on clean clothes after the lice treatment.
- ◆ DO NOT use these treatments more often than recommended because they can be harmful to your child’s health. Also, these solutions WILL NOT prevent lice. They should not be used on a regular basis, only when live, crawling bugs are found.

How to take care of your home:

- ◆ Wash (or dry clean) all recently worn clothes and bed linens in hot water (120-140 degrees). Remember to include hats, scarves, gloves, mittens, and hair accessories.
- ◆ Place items in a clothes dryer at high heat for 20 minutes.
- ◆ Things that cannot be washed or dry cleaned (ex. toys, stuffed animals) must be put in a sealed bag for 10 days.
- ◆ Clean combs and brushes by soaking in hot (130 degree), soapy water or lice control product solution for 10 minutes, then scrubbing with an old toothbrush.
- ◆ Sprays are NOT recommended and can be harmful to your family. It is rare for lice to remain on furniture or carpet because head lice do not want to leave the head of a person. Focus your

efforts on the head. Simple vacuuming of areas that have been in direct contact with the head such as car head rests, child care seats, sofa or chairs is recommended. Place vacuum bag in a sealed trash bag and dispose outside of your home.

- ◆ Check all family members and household contacts, but only treat them if they have lice. Do not treat as a precaution. People of any age can get lice. Everyone over 2 years with live lice must also be treated on the same day. Frequent checking is recommended. If lice are found, treat, check daily for 2 weeks, then check weekly. Remove any remaining nits. Pets are not carriers of lice.

Notifying others and educating your child:

- ◆ Notify your child's school because this helps monitor for lice school and class-wide.
- ◆ Notify households where your child has recently visited for extended periods of time or overnight (ex. babysitter, afterschool care, etc.)
- ◆ Only those contacts found to have active lice should be treated.
- ◆ Educate your child on how head lice are spread. Teach never to share hats, combs, brushes, scarves, etc. with others and to keep their coat separate from others (not thrown in a big pile of coats). Instruct them to tell you if their head feels "itchy".

Returning to school:

- ◆ Your child should return to school the next day (after treatment and combing) because attendance is important.
- ◆ An adult must accompany the child to school to meet with the school nurse or other assigned staff member.
- ◆ The school nurse or other designated staff member trained in the procedure will check your child's head to make sure there are no live bugs and that progress has been made on combing and removing nits.
- ◆ Continue combing daily to remove any additional nits. This takes a lot of patience but is very important.

Please contact your school nurse or health care provider if you have any questions or concerns!

Bed Bug Information

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Bed bugs are a common problem across our city and state. Below is additional information that you may find helpful.

What do bed bugs look like and why are they hard to get rid of?

- ◆ An adult bed bug is very small, about 1/4 – 3/8 inches long and reddish brown in color.
- ◆ Bed bugs have an oval shape with a flattened body when unfed; their body becomes swollen after they have fed.
- ◆ Bed bugs cannot fly or jump, but they can walk very fast. They are able to cling tightly to surfaces, and they can fit into very small cracks and crevices where they often hide during the day.
- ◆ Bed bugs can survive a year without a blood meal making it hard to get rid of them.

- ◆ Bed bugs do not mean poor hygiene or housekeeping but having a lot of clutter in the home can make it much hard to get rid of bed bugs.

How do I know if I have bed bugs? What are some tell-tale signs of bed bugs?

- ◆ Bed bugs hide during the day in cracks and crevices of bedding, mattress seams, and bed frames. With severe infestations they can hide in baseboards, picture frames, dressers, window and door frames, carpeting, drapes, and floor boards. In extreme cases bed bugs have been found in the corners of the ceilings.
- ◆ Bed bugs move very fast and usually come out only at night to feed. If seen in daylight it may mean heavy infestation.
- ◆ The most obvious signs of bed bugs are small black spots (feces) deposited in and near bed bug hiding places.
- ◆ Shed bed bug skins, bed bug egg shells and live bed bugs also may be found.
- ◆ Another sign is blood stains, which typically occur when a bed bug is squashed and can include dark spots on mattress edges or rusty/reddish spots of blood on bedsheets.
- ◆ Itchy red welts may be the result of bed bug bites, but other insects, arthropods and medical conditions can produce similar reactions. It is important to confirm whether the bites were caused by bedbugs by conducting a bed bug inspection.
- ◆ Bites are typically painless and occur when the person is asleep. Bite reactions vary from person to person. Some people exhibit no reaction whatsoever and other experience a red, raised itchy red welt.
- ◆ Bites on the skin does not automatically mean that bed bugs are the cause. The bites can be mosquito, spider, flea bites or other insects.
- ◆ Unlike fleabites that mainly occur around the ankles, bed bugs bite skin that is exposed during sleep, like the face, neck, arms, shoulders, and hands. Rows of three or more welts on exposed skin can be a sign of bed bugs. A small, hard, white welt may develop at the site of each bite along with severe itching that can last several hours to days.
- ◆ Suspect bed bugs if a person wakes up with itchy welts that were not present when they went to sleep.

. Where are bed bugs found? Where do they hide?

- ◆ Bed bugs can be found in places that are frequented or occupied by humans.
- ◆ Bed bugs are most commonly found in dwellings with a high rate of occupant turnover, such as hotels, hostels, dormitories, apartment complexes, and movie theaters.
- ◆ Bed bugs can infest private dwellings.
- ◆ Bed bugs can infest cabs, buses, airplanes, ships, and trains.
- ◆ Bed bugs will hide in mattresses and box springs, bed frames, dressers, upholstered furniture and other furniture, cracks and crevices, electrical outlets, carpet tack strips, baseboards, window and door casings, drapery pleats, wall hangings, ceiling moldings, seams in wallpaper, etc.

How can I keep from bringing bed bugs into my home?

- ◆ Do not bring infested items into your home. It is important to inspect any new or used furniture carefully before it is brought into your home.
- ◆ When traveling, look for evidence of bed bugs, such as fecal spots on mattresses, before unpacking.
- ◆ Check belongings after visits with family members or friends who may have bed bugs. If needed bag items in sealed plastic bags until they can be laundered or treated in hot dryer.
- ◆ If needed, contact a professional pest control company.

Can bed bugs transmit diseases or make me sick?

- ◆ Bed bugs are not known to transmit disease.
- ◆ Scratching can cause skin infections. Consult with your healthcare provider before treating skin irritation. Your healthcare provider may recommend or prescribe antihistamines, corticosteroids, and/or antibiotic ointment to minimize allergic reactions/infections.

How can I get rid of bed bugs?

- ◆ Once you have identified a bed bug infestation, you will probably require the help of a professional pest control specialist. But a professional can't do it alone.
- ◆ To get rid of bed bugs, you must remove clutter such as pictures, books and clothing from the infested area so there are fewer places for the bugs to hide.
- ◆ Vacuuming will remove some of the bed bugs, but the eggs are glued in place and can't be removed by vacuuming.
- ◆ When vacuuming, concentrate on mattress seams and around any tufts or buttons. Vacuum wherever your inspection revealed the presence of bed bugs—furniture, box springs, bed frames, floors and baseboards.
- ◆ Remove the vacuum bag immediately; place it in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it outdoors. Infested items such as clothing, shoes, bedding and blankets can be placed in a clothes dryer on high heat for 20 minutes to kill bed bugs and their eggs.
- ◆ You can also launder bed linens and clothing using hot water. The water temperature must be 120-140° F to kill bed bugs.
- ◆ Mattresses and box springs may be enclosed in bed bug-proof zippered cover to kill the bugs inside. The cover should remain in place for more than one year because bed bugs can survive a long time without feeding.

RESOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Public Health Dayton & Montgomery County <https://www.phdmc.org/features/73-bed-bug-information>

Central Ohio Bed Bug Task Force web site at www.centralohiobedbugs.org

If you have any questions regarding bed bugs, please contact your child's school nurse.

Thank you!

Health Services