



Head's Up on Head Lice!

Dear Collingwood Parents,

From time to time there may be cases of head lice (pediculosis) in the school. This is nothing to panic about. Head lice are a nuisance but they are not a health hazard. They do not spread disease.

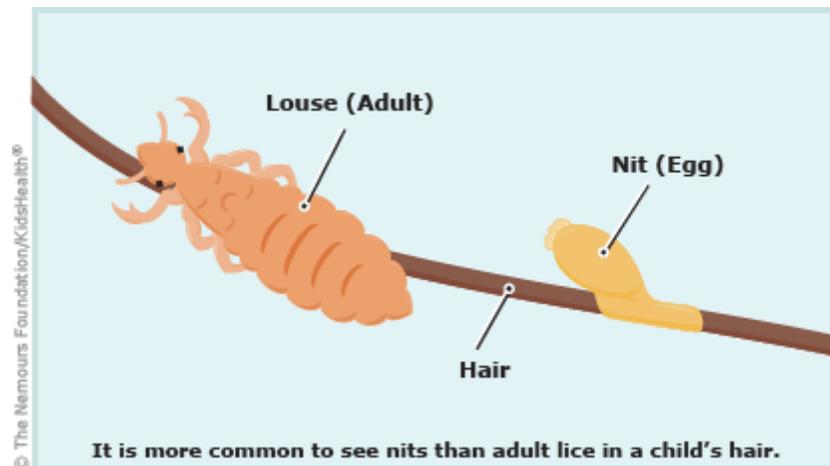
We no longer do mass screening of students at the school, but instead opt to check heads on an as needed basis (i.e. teacher notes student scratching). It is therefore very important that parents and caregivers make screening a regular part of their weekly hygiene routine. This is a problem at all levels of the school so please check all family members.

What are head lice?

- Tiny wingless insects that are the size of a sesame seed (1/8 of an inch in size).
- Head lice have six legs for holding onto hair and moving quickly. They do not jump or fly.
- They can be grey (transparent) when first hatched or brownish in colour once they've ingested blood.

What are nits?

- The eggs of head lice.
- Nits are shaped like a tear drop and are located close to the scalp, especially at the nape of the neck, crown of the head and behind the ears.
- They are firmly attached to the hair shaft.



How are head lice spread?

- Directly through head-to-head contact, or indirectly (less frequently) through sharing clothing, combs, hats, scarves, bed linens, towels and earphones, etc.
- Young children frequently get head lice because they have more head-to-head contact.
- Having head lice has nothing to do with being dirty or having bad hygiene. Head lice have been around for thousands of years and prefer living on clean hair.
- Head lice are infrequently spread in the school setting; classroom carpets and cloakrooms (proximity of coats) pose no risk for transmission. 90% of head lice is transmitted outside the school setting.

How do I know if my child has head lice?

- If you see your child itching or scratching his head, or notice scratch marks or a rash on his neck, crown of head or behind the ears, inspect the head for head lice.
- Not everyone who has head lice will have symptoms of itching or scratching, which is why it's very important to check your child's head routinely.
- To inspect your child's head:
 - Ask him to sit in a place with bright light (sunshine is best).
 - Look closely through their hair, especially behind their ears, at the nape of their neck and the top of their head.
 - Consider covering the dry hair in white conditioner, using a lice comb to comb through their hair, wiping the comb on a white towel or paper towel to see if lice appear on it.
- Don't forget to:
 - Inspect the head of everyone in your household.
 - Contact your child's school, day care, close friends, etc, so that other children's heads can also be inspected by their parent or guardian.
- Please see the [Head Lice Detection Map](#)

If I find live lice, how do I get rid of them?

- Head Lice are getting harder to beat. The Canadian Pediatric Society now refers to them as "Super Lice". Standard treatments are no longer effective. The following 4 steps are essential to getting rid of head lice in your family:
 1. **Keep it to yourself**
Avoid head-to-head contact and sharing things like brushes or hats. You may also consider cutting kids' hair shorter, or keeping long hair tied back in braids or ponytails, because lice move between people by crawling onto hair. Do not share combs, brushes or hair clips and consider taking your own pillow and linens to a sleepover or camp.
 2. **Treat it**
Skip the chemicals and opt for products that work by dissolving the louse's waxy exoskeleton, which leads to dehydration and death (Nyda). Remember to carefully follow manufacturer's instruction.

Wet combing (see [Wet Combing Instructions](#)) with a smothering agent like olive/coconut oil or a lot of conditioner may also do the trick. If all else fails, consult a lice-removal service (Lice 911; Lice Squad).

3. **Comb it**

A quality lice comb is crucial. The best ones are made with fine metal teeth that are close together, making them more effective at removing eggs before they hatch. You will need to do daily wet combing to ensure all of the eggs are removed.

4. **Clean house**

Anything that can be put in the dryer, like sheets, pillowcases, stuffies and hats, should go in for 30 minutes. Items that can't be put in the dryer or vacuumed should be sealed in garbage bags for two days. Lice die within 24 to 48 hours away from their blood supply, the scalp.

If you have any questions, concerns or need assistance with learning how to screen please do not hesitate to contact the Health Center at either campus. The nurses will be happy to help.

Sincerely,

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