

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Many parents have expressed concern regarding head lice at Murray Avenue School. Head lice are an age-old problem. In reality, although an annoyance, lice are not dangerous and do not spread disease. We should not make them more important than they are. Head lice are a common problem in all schools, and individual cases can be eliminated if the appropriate steps are followed. Children are very matter-of-fact about lice, and adults can take a lesson from the children and remember to keep it in perspective. Be compassionate and sensitive to incidents of head lice.

Important Facts About Head Lice

- The primary mode of transmission of head lice is head-to-head contact; however it is possible for it to be spread through contact with inanimate objects such as pillows, hats, helmets etc.
- The head louse is a 6-legged, wingless parasite that feeds on skin/blood. They are about 1/16 of an inch long, grayish with dark edges.
- Its life cycle is 30 days and the female louse will lay 5-10 eggs or nits per day.
- Nits will hatch within 7-10 days.
- Head lice are more commonly found on clean, healthy heads. They do not like dirty hair.
- Head lice are transmitted from person to person and hygiene is not a factor. They can be spread anywhere there is head to head contact or shared head gear/pillows.
- Head lice do not:
 - jump or fly.
 - spread disease.
 - live on animals, nor can animals spread them.
 - spread to other parts of the body.

Limiting the Spread of Lice

- Children should be instructed not to share hats, helmets, pillows, combs, brushes and hair ornaments.
- Head-to-head contact should be avoided.
- Children with long hair may want to keep it pulled back.

The Role of the PTA

After every major holiday break the Murray Ave. PTA organizes parent volunteers from every class to conduct a "Healthy Hair" check. These checks have been effective and, although not perfect, have always resulted in the detection of at least one case and often several cases of head lice, therefore leading to less spread to the rest of the school. **“Healthy Hair” checks are NOT meant to take the place of regular in-home screening by parents.**

Checking Your Child for Lice

- It is **essential** that parents routinely check their child for evidence of head lice because head lice can be picked up anywhere, at anytime not just during school breaks.
- The most common symptom of head lice infestation is itching, however many children do not experience any itching at all.
- The presence of nits is the best way to detect lice. Nits are small whitish ovals, smaller than a sesame seed that are cemented to the hair shaft. Unlike dandruff, they cannot be brushed away. If you are in doubt, consult the school nurse.

If You Suspect Head Lice

- Have your child checked by someone who knows what they are looking for, such as the

school nurse.

- **Please report any suspected or confirmed cases of head lice to the nurse immediately.** Unfortunately, some parents do not report cases of lice to the nurse because of the stigma associated with the condition. This lack of communication between school and home can cause unnecessary spread.
- Lice are very tenacious and adaptable creatures and even the most thorough prevention techniques do not always work. It is critical for home and school to work together to help break the cycle of re-infestation.

Mamaroneck School District Lice Policy

- All students with confirmed or suspected cases of head lice should be reported to the school nurse. Names will be kept confidential.
- Any student with a confirmed case of head lice may not return to school until he/she is cleared by the school nurse.
- Parents will be notified of any occurrence of head lice in their child's class.
- The district policy can be found at <http://mamkschoolspta.org/murray/pdf/Head%20Lice%205420%20extract.pdf>.

What to Do If Your Child Has Head Lice

Do not panic. Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with cleanliness, nor does it reflect on you as a parent. The problem can be eliminated, with some effort. Simply follow these instructions:

1. Examine Your Child's Head. This will ensure that you know what the nits look like. They are tiny, grayish-white ovals smaller than a sesame seed attached to the hair, near the scalp, especially behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. If a whitish speck cannot be dislodged with a Q-tip, it is probably a nit.

2. Check Other Family Members. This will determine if they are infested. All household members should be checked for head lice, and only those with live lice or nits within 1 cm of the scalp should be treated.

3. Use an Effective Lice Treatment. Your pharmacist or physician can recommend an effective pediculicide product. Follow the directions exactly as prescribed being sure not to leave the shampoo on the head longer than stated. When used as directed, it will be very effective at killing living head lice and some of the nits or eggs. But not all of the nits or eggs will be killed. Because 20 to 30% of the eggs remain viable after treatment, a second treatment 7 to 10 days later is necessary to kill newly emerged lice hatched from eggs that survived the first treatment.

4. Remove the Nits (Lice Eggs). Because no pediculicide product kills all the eggs, it is recommended to remove all traces of nits daily for two weeks (especially the ones within 1 cm of the scalp) to prevent them from hatching and having a re-infestation. A special comb for this task is usually provided with the treatment product.

5. Wash All Clothes, Bed Linens, Towels and Outerwear. Use hot water and dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Items that cannot be safely washed, such as stuffed animals, should be dry cleaned or stored outside of the home for two weeks in a sealed plastic bag. This is because adult lice can survive for 48 to 55 hours at room temperature without a host.

6. Clean Combs and Brushed in Hot, Soapy Water. Water should be at least 130 degrees F, and it

is advisable to let combs and brushes soak for at least 10 minutes.

7. Vacuum Everywhere. This ensures your home is free of lice. Vacuum carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture: anything that might hold lice. Do a thorough job and discard vacuum bags promptly. Include car upholstery!

8. Please Inform Other Parents. It is appropriate to inform the parents of your child's playmates and friends with whom you car pool or recently had a playdate or sleepover so that they may check their children's heads.

9. Check In With The School Nurse. When your child returns to school after treatment **YOU MUST** accompany him/her to the school nurse's office. You are required to bring proof of treatment, ie bottle of shampoo or a note from a professional service stating what kind of treatment was given and that the child is nit-free. The nurse will give clearance for your child to return to class.

Criteria for Clearance to Return to School

- No evidence of live lice.
- **After a student is cleared to return to school, it is the responsibility of the parent to re-treat within 7-10 days and to continue checking the child daily for lice or nits for a period of at least four weeks.**
- The school nurse is available for consultation regarding prevention and treatment. Additionally, follow up checks are done by the nurse one day after, one week after and two weeks after treatment.

For more information, the nurse recommends <http://identify.us.com/head-lice/>.

We hope you find this information helpful. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The PTA Healthy Hair Co-Chairs

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