

NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

**Prevention and Control Measures for Head Lice**

Head lice are spread most commonly by direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact and much less frequently by sharing clothing or belongings onto which lice or nits may have crawled or fallen. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp.

The following are steps which can be taken to help prevent and control the spread of head lice:

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camp).
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes.
- Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfest combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in very hot water (at least 130° F) for 5-10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- Machine wash clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130° F) laundry cycle, and then dry the items using the high heat drying cycle.
- Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum the carpets and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.
- Check all persons in the household. Examine the scalp and hair, especially around the nape of the neck and behind the ears, for lice and nits (eggs). Nits are attached to the hair shaft about ¼" from the scalp; they may be gray/brownish in color, oval-shaped, and they are very small. They are sometimes mistaken for dandruff.
- Ask your health care provider what remedy he/she recommends for treatment of head lice. Follow the directions of over-the-counter and prescription treatments carefully. Many products suggest re-treating the person after 7-10 days.