



# THE FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

## What are they?

- Head lice are small insects with six legs usually the size of a sesame seed (the seeds on burger buns).
- They live on or very close to the scalp and don't wander far down the hair shafts for very long.
- They can only live on human beings; you can't catch them from animals.
- Nits are **not** the same thing as lice. Lice are the insects which move around the head. Nits are egg cases laid by lice, stuck on to hair shafts; they are smaller than a pin head and are pearly white.
- If you have nits it doesn't always mean that you have head lice. When you have got rid of all the lice, the nits will stay stuck to the hair until it grows out.
- You only have head lice if you can find a living, moving louse (not a nit) on the scalp.
- Anybody can get head lice.
- Head lice infections are caught from close family and friends in the home and community, not from the school.
- Spread of head lice requires direct head to head contact. They can't swim, fly, hop or jump.

## Prevention - can you stop them?

- The best way to stop infection is for families to learn how to check their own heads. This way they can find any lice before they have a chance to breed.
- Instruct children not to share hats, combs, brushes, etc.
- All bedding, towels, and clothing from the infected individual should be cleaned with soap and hot water and placed in a dryer for at least 20 minutes to help kill any remaining lice. Dry-clean all clothes that need to be dry-cleaned. Seal the infested individual's stuffed toys in a plastic bag and leave them for 10 days to allow all lice to die of starvation. Dispose of or soak combs and hairbrushes in rubbing alcohol or the medicated shampoo used to kill lice. Throw out any hair accessories, such as hair elastics and ribbons. Thoroughly vacuum carpets and upholstered furniture.
- Pets cannot become infested with head and body lice, so no precaution is required.

## Returning to School

- Students may return to school the day after treatment for head lice as long as there are no live lice upon re-inspection by designated school personnel.
- Students will be re-inspected by designated school personnel 14 days after initial treatment to make sure there are no live head lice.
- Students found to have live head lice will be excluded from school.
- Consult your healthcare provider if you are having difficulties getting rid of your child's head lice.