

Talking about head lice seems to be a ticklish subject, one that often leaves a person scratching their head. We would like to demystify this topic for you so you can help us decrease the hysteria which inevitably seems to follow the discovery of a case of head lice in the schools.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, head lice are not known to transmit any disease and therefore are not considered a health hazard. They are an irritation and an inconvenience for the family who has to treat them. Getting head lice is not related to the cleanliness of a person or his or her environment. On any day, in any school, there is a good chance that someone has a case of head lice.

There are proactive steps that can be taken to prevent head lice. Head to head contact is the most common way lice are spread. You can discourage students from sharing combs, hats, hoodies and hair ribbons. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed so, cleaning sports mats and head gear after use should eliminate the chance of a student becoming infested while using sports equipment.

If a student is identified as having an active (meaning the lice are crawling) case of head lice they are asked to go home and treat the infestation. Treatment usually consists of an Over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication. Students need to be in school learning so we instruct them to return to school the day following treatment. We ask the student's parent to be responsible for letting friends and family know about their situation so they, in turn, can do their own private head checks on family members. We do not advocate mass head checks at school.

Please go to this post on our blog: <http://www.usdschoolnurses.blogspot.com/2013/08/head-lice.html> and click on the word **information** to be directed to additional facts about head lice, preventative measures and treatment. We would appreciate it if you would share this post with parents or others who may have questions or misinformation about head lice.

Sincerely,

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