

### **What do Lice and Nits look like:**

Head lice are very small, tan-colored insects (less than 1/8" long) which live on human heads. They lay their eggs (nits) close to the scalp. The eggs are tiny, about the size of a small needle and the color is gray or white.

### **How are they spread:**

Lice are spread by direct person to person contact and less commonly by sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, hats, scarves, jackets. Lice do not jump or fly; they crawl and can fall off the head. Head lice do not live longer than 48 hours off the head. They only lay their eggs while on the head. Nits which are more than ¼" from the scalp are dead or empty and will not hatch. The eggs do not hatch if they fall off. Lice do not spread to or from pets.

### **Signs and Symptoms:**

- Itching of the scalp and neck
- Crawling lice in the hair
- Eggs (nits) glued to the hair often found around the ears and nape of neck
- Scratch marks on the scalp or back of the neck at the hairline

### **Period of Communicability:**

Until treated with lice killing medications. Crawling forms of the louse are communicable, the nits are not.

### **Treatment:**

Use a lice killing shampoo or lotion obtained either over the counter at the store or by prescription from your physician.

Follow the directions carefully. Directions will vary depending on the product. If live lice are seen after treatment, consult your physician. Removing the nits after proper treatment is difficult since they are glued onto the hair shaft as they are laid. A fine toothed lice comb is needed for this purpose. **Removal of nits (eggs) from the hair shaft is essential. If one nit hatches...your child will have lice again.**

Most medications recommend a second treatment in 7-10 days later to kill any live lice that may have hatched since the first treatment.

### **Cleaning:**

- Clean floors, furniture, mattress and carpeting by thorough vacuuming and disposing of the bag.
- Clothing such as jackets, hats, scarves, bedding, and towels should be washed in hot 130degrees F water and dried in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes before using again.
- Un-washable clothing or linens and stuffed toys can be dry cleaned or sealed in plastic bags for 2 weeks.
- Combs, brushes, and similar items must either be soaked in the medicated shampoo or placed in 130 degree water for 10 minutes.