

KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT
HEALTH SERVICES

3/4/10

LICE INFORMATION AND DETECTION

An active case of head lice was found in your student's classroom today. Head lice are a common occurrence in classrooms around our nation and seem to be increasingly difficult to get rid of. The following information will help you check for signs of infestation. Early detection and prompt treatment make the infestation easier to manage both at home and at school.

Head lice are insect parasites that feed several times a day on human blood (not pets) and lay their eggs (nits) on human scalp hair. A louse is about the size of a sesame seed and ranges in color from tan to grayish black. The louse cannot jump or fly, but is capable of crawling incredibly fast.

The female louse lives about 30 days and may deposit more than 100 nits (eggs) during her lifetime. Nits appear silver, white or light brown and are oval shaped. They are "cemented" to the hair shaft and most frequently found at the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and at the crown of the head. The nits hatch in 7-10 days and the louse becomes mature in 1-2 week.

Anyone is a potential candidate for lice. Lice can be transmitted ("caught") when people put their heads close together or share hats, combs, clothing, towels, earphones, etc. It is also possible for upholstered surfaces like couches or car seats that have been recently occupied by someone with lice to harbor them.

Lice and/or their eggs (nits) can be seen upon close examination of the head of a person with lice. It is suggested that you follow the steps below every other day for the next two weeks and occasionally thereafter throughout the lice season. Please note that lice shampoo ingredients are not recommended to be used unnecessarily or often. Please use caution to first detect the actual presence of lice/nits prior to its use, and then use only according to the directions on the bottle.

1. Using a strong light, first remove any tangles in the hair. Start behind one ear and work your way around the bottom of the head to the back of the other ear. Section off a very thin portion of hair and look near the scalp for any small white ovals attached to the hair shaft. It is easy to confuse hairspray droplets, skin castings and other similar looking items with nits. All except nits can be easily moved with pressure from the fingers. Nits cannot. Nits are strongly glued onto the hair shaft and must be specifically picked off.
2. Repeat the above process for the top (crown) of the head.
3. Remind your student to not share combs, clothing and other items with his/her friends.
4. Call your school nurse with questions.