

## **HEAD LICE (PEDICULOSIS CAPITIS)**

### **CAUSE:**

- Pediculosis Capitis, the head louse which infests the hair on the head.

### **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS:**

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites of the head louse.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected with bacteria found on the person's skin.

### **INCUBATION PERIOD:**

- The life cycle of the head louse has three stages: egg, nymph, and adult:
- Nits are head lice eggs. Nits take about 1 week to hatch (range 6 to 9 days).
- The egg hatches to release a nymph, they become adults in about 7 days after hatching.
- The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs (each with claws), and is tan to grayish-white in color.

### **TRANSMISSION:**

- Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly.
- Head-to-head contact with an already infested person.
- Dogs, cats, and other pets do not play a role in the spread of head lice.

### **PERIOD OF COMMUNICABILITY:**

- Head Lice cannot survive long without a HUMAN host.
- To live, adult lice need to feed on blood several times daily.
- Without blood meals, the louse will die within 1 to 2 days off the host.

### **PREVENTIVE MEASURES:**

- See "Administrative Guidelines for Dealing with Pediculosis Capitis (Head Lice) for School Personnel".
- Conduct periodic head lice screening throughout the school as indicated and examine siblings, close friends and playmates of infested student.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS:**

- **NO NITs or LIVE LICE**
- Exclude any student with live lice or nit
- Student must be accompanied by parent/guardian for a follow-up head check by school personnel for clearance to return to school.
- If Head Lice becomes chronic or persistent a referral to the school social worker is needed.