



2096 Red Arrow Trail
Madison, WI 53711
608-275-6740



Head Lice (Pediculosis)

Communicable Disease Exposure Notice

Dear Parents:

Your child may have been exposed to the communicable disease **Head Lice (Pediculosis)** in a Reach Dane/Reach Green classroom on the following date_____.

Please review the information below. If you have any questions, or if you child begins experiencing symptoms of the illness, contact your child's primary care provider or one of the agencies listed below.

Public Health – Madison & Dane County

(608) 266-4821

Green County Health Department

(608) 328-9390

What is head lice (pediculosis)?

Head lice are a nuisance disease, caused by small wingless insects. The insects cause an infestation on the hair of the head. The lice feed on human blood that can cause severe local itching. Head lice do not carry or spread disease. Head lice infestation in school-age children and daycare centers is common, and are easily spread from person-to-person. Anyone may become infested with head lice, regardless of age, sex, race, or standards of personal hygiene.

What are the symptoms of head lice?

Symptoms include intense itching at the back of the head and around the ears. Itching in these areas should lead to an examination of the scalp for nits (eggs). Nits look like tiny bits of dandruff, but cannot be moved easily down the hair shaft.

How does a person get head lice?

Head lice are spread easily between children through direct head-to-head contact. Head lice can also be spread by indirect contact with lice-carrying objects such as combs, brushes, hats or scarves. Since nits (eggs) are laid by the adult lice, the chances of nits being spread from person-to-person are minimal.

How soon do symptoms appear?

The first symptoms of head lice occur about 14 to 21 days after contact with another infested person.

How long is a person able to spread head lice?

Lice can be spread as long as they remain **alive** on the infested person or their clothing. Lice from animals do not infest humans.

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How long is a child with head lice excluded from childcare?

Head Lice does not require immediate exclusion. Children found to have head lice may stay until end of day if a cap is worn. Children may return to the classroom after the first treatment with an effective pediculicide (medicated shampoo used to treat head lice). Children with treated nits can remain in the classroom.

What can be done to prevent the spread of head lice?

- Avoid physical contact with infested individuals and their belongings, especially clothing, headgear, brushes, combs and bedding.
- Combs and brushes used on infested persons should be immersed in hot water (>130°), Lysol®, rubbing alcohol or a lice-killing chemical for 1 hour.
- Floors, rugs, pillows and upholstered furniture should be thoroughly vacuumed, and the vacuum bag discarded when complete. Unattached to the body and without a blood meal, head lice survive for approximately 6-24 hours.
- Clothing, linen and cloth toys that were worn or handled by an infested individual with the 2 days prior of being diagnosed with head lice should be washed in hot water (>130° F) or machine dried at the hottest setting for 20 minutes. Other articles may be dry cleaned or sealed in plastic bags for at least 10 days to destroy lice and eggs.
- Parents should perform regular lice checks on the scalp of children who attend school and day care centers, especially when excessive itching is noticed.
- Fogging with insecticides or spraying the environment with lice-killing chemicals is not recommended.

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What is the treatment for head lice?

There are several over-the-counter and prescription medicated shampoos (pediculicide) commonly used to treat head lice.

- Shampoos or creme rinses that contain **1% permethrin** have the fastest killing time against adult lice and the highest nit-killing capability. Permethrin has a residual effect that will continue to kill nits for several days after the first application. While one application might be sufficient to kill lice and nits, experts suggest a second treatment one week after the first.
- Shampoos that contain **pyrethrin** kill lice quickly but do not leave a residual that will continue to kill nits, resulting in a less effective treatment. Two applications of these types of shampoo 7-10 days apart are recommended to kill nits.
- Shampoos containing malathion and lindane are available by prescription only. Your health care provider can advise you on these treatment options.
- Avoid wearing plastic wrap and shower caps when using lice-killing medication. Lice-killing medications have not been safety-tested for use with plastic wrap or shower caps.
- Alternate treatment methods such as the use of tub butter or margarine, mayonnaise, Vaseline® and olive oil, designed to smother head lice and nits can be used with discretion for those persons for whom lice-killing medications have failed. The effectiveness of alternate treatments is unclear. Kerosene, gasoline and other flammable products should never be used to treat head lice. Avoid using powder to remove alternate treatments from the hair. Grease cutting shampoos or dish soap may be used to remove alternate treatment.
- Wearing plastic wrap and shower caps should never be used on young children, and used with discretion on older children and adults when alternate treatments are used.
- No pediculicide kills all the nits. Thus, it is important to remove as many nits as possible before they hatch. Manual removal of nits with a nit comb, fingernails, or by cutting strands of hair that contain nits is essential following treatment with pediculocides or alternate treatments. To aid in the removal of nits, hair can be soaked in a 3% to 5% white vinegar solution followed by application of a damp towel soaked in the same solution for 30-60 minutes before attempting nit removal.

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Head Lice Work Chart – Who Does What

	What Needs to be Done	Who Is To Do It	Done (✓)
1	Examine each family member's head.		
2	Consult with your doctor or go to the drug store for medicated product (shampoo/cream rinse).		
3	Treat all members of the family that are infested.		
4	Soak combs and brushes in hot water (130°), Lysol, rubbing alcohol or a lice-killing chemical for 1 hour.		
5	Using a clean, fine tooth nit comb, carefully comb each person's hair or use tweezers or fingernails to remove all nits. This may take 20-30 minutes or longer.		
6	Take sheets, pillow case, blankets, and bedspreads off beds of all infected persons.		
7	Wash and dry all bedding on hot settings.		
8	Put pillows and non-washable bedding in the dryer at the hottest setting for 20 minutes or seal in a plastic bag for 14 days.		
9	Vacuum all mattresses or run a hot iron over them – especially around any buttons.		
10	Make all beds with clean bedding.		
11	Thoroughly vacuum all upholstered furniture, throw pillows, and seats in car.		
12	Thoroughly vacuum all carpets.		
13	Wash all jackets, sweaters, hats and other clothes that have come in contact with infested persons in the last two or three days. Don't forget to wash or treat any hair accessories.		
14	Take non-washable clothes to the cleaners or use alternative treatment: Hot dryer for 20 minutes; seal in plastic bag for 14 days; put in freezer for 48 hours.		
15	Fold clean clothes and put them away.		
16	Notify all people that have recently been in contact with infested person(s).		

Remember to check DAILY for nits.