



## Head Lice

### A Real Head Scratcher For Parents/Legal Guardians

Pediculosis, or head lice, is a condition that affects approximately 6 - 12 million children between the ages of 3 and 12 years of age, and about one in every 100 elementary schools every year.

Head lice are parasites that are generally found on the scalp, around the ears, and at the back of the neck. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, and can be a reddish brown color. Eggs, or nits, are small and silver in color.

Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and they do not transmit disease. The most common symptom of head lice is head scratching, particularly at night. If you suspect your child has head lice, have them examined by your health care provider and follow their directions.

St. Mary's County Public Schools has a No Live Lice or Viable Nit Protocol in keeping with the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses.

When a student is found to have live lice or nits less than one-fourth inch from the scalp, the parents/legal guardians will be notified to pick up their child. The student must be treated by an over-the-counter or prescription insecticide shampoo before returning to school. These shampoos should kill the live lice, but may not kill all of the nits. You may need to treat again in 7 - 10 days.

#### How to get your child back to school:

- Your child must be free of live lice and all nits close to the scalp (within one-fourth inch from scalp).
- Your child must be checked by school health staff before returning to class.

For more information about the treatment and prevention of head lice, ask your school nurse.