

# The Berkeley School

## Head Lice Information and Policy Sheet

“It takes a village to get rid of head lice!”

Q: What is this?

A: Your most important tool for getting rid of head lice.

Unfortunately, there is no easy, convenient way to get rid of head lice. It’s a mistake to assume that following the instructions on a pesticide shampoo alone will do the trick. Repeated combing with a metal lice comb is the **BEST WAY** to remove 100% of these pesky parasites and stop the cycle of reinfestation. If you don’t already own a metal lice comb, you should buy one to have on hand.



- Metal (not plastic or wooden) teeth
- Long teeth work best on thick hair

It’s important to remember what head lice are **NOT**: they are not a shameful sign of poor hygiene or dirty hair. They are not a serious health problem, as they don’t carry or spread disease. However, they **ARE** a serious nuisance, one that can spread quickly and re-infect children often if every member of our community doesn’t share a commitment to vigilance and quick response. There are services that will treat and comb your child for you, but they can be expensive. It’s certainly possible to handle this problem yourself, but thoroughness and repetition are key to your success.

There is a great deal of conflicting information out there about the best way to treat head lice. You as a parent, of course, are encouraged to educate yourself on the subject and make your own decisions. Whatever treatment you choose (chemical lice shampoo, “natural” lice treatment, “nitpicking” the eggs off the hair with fingertips or scissors, combing with the metal lice comb, or some combination of these methods), please understand that the most important, and most often overlooked, factor in lice-free living is subsequent regular inspection and combing with the metal lice comb. Any chemical or nitpicking treatment can miss one or two nits, or eggs, and the metal lice comb usually doesn’t affect them at all; it simply removes adult lice. The trick is to keep removing the inevitable straggler lice as they hatch and before they mature enough to reproduce. Remember, this is a community-wide problem, and we can’t solve it unless everyone in our community does his or her part.

- Turn over for TBS Head Lice Policy -

## TBS Head Lice Policy

If you find lice (brownish bugs about the size of a sesame seed) or nits (tiny tan or white eggs stuck to the hair shaft close to the scalp) in your child's hair outside of school, please begin treatment immediately and notify the office at once so that his/her classmates can be checked. If lice or nits are found in your child's hair during school, you will be contacted and asked to pick him/her up. In both cases, you must treat your child's lice (with pesticide shampoo or other professional lice treatment and combing with a metal lice comb, or careful combing with the lice comb alone) before he or she can come back to school, and you must use the lice comb every day or two for two weeks afterward. After the two-week period, continue to check your child's head on at least a weekly basis, more often if you know of an outbreak at school.

### **FAQ's About Head Lice:**

#### **Does TBS have a "no nits" policy?**

Yes. In the fall of 2009, TBS adopted a "no nits" policy, realizing that since lice can be difficult to see once they hatch because they move so quickly, many "head checkers" stop looking once they find nits, or lice eggs. It's a safe assumption that, where there are nits, there are lice that laid them!

#### **Can't I assume that my child is lice-free if s/he is not experiencing intense itching?**

It's true that the most common symptom of head lice is itching, but often (especially if there are only a few lice present) there are no symptoms at all. This is why regular screening is so important in keeping our community lice-free, and why we all have to do our part. Since adult lice move so quickly, and nits can be hard to see on light hair, combing is often the best way to identify lice, as well as treat them.

#### **What is the recommended procedure for using the lice comb?**

It's important to use a metal comb, not one made from plastic or wood. These combs are readily available over the counter. Unless your child's hair is very short, slathering the hair with conditioner makes combing easier, and immobilizes the lice. Comb carefully through the hair, roots to ends, section by section, dipping the comb into a bowl of water to remove lice between strokes. This can be a lengthy process, especially if your child has long or curly hair.

#### **Do I really have to comb every day or two, for two whole weeks? Isn't a pesticide shampoo enough?**

We can't stress enough that the BEST way to get rid of lice permanently is to keep up over time with your manual removal of lice by combing. Often parents believe their child has been re-infected, when they are just seeing the stragglers they missed the first time around. We know this is a nuisance, and that's why it's so important for each member of our community to share in the responsibility of keeping our children lice-free.

**For more information, see: [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org); [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org); [www.nitpixies.com](http://www.nitpixies.com)**