Head Lice

In the US, it is estimated that 6-12 million head lice infestations occur in children 3-11 years old each year.

Head lice can be spread from direct head-to-head contact with infested hair, by shared hats or head gear, and other objects not washed between uses. Individuals with head lice may not experience any symptoms. However, some will experience:

- Itching of the skin where lice feed on the scalp or neck
- Scratching behind and around the ears and at the nape of the neck
- Open sores and crusting caused by scratching that may lead to a secondary bacterial infection associated with swollen lymph nodes

The incubation period for head lice is 7-12 days from laying to hatching eggs. LICE CAN REPRODUCE FOR 2-3 WEEKS AFTER HATCHING. **Only lice, not nits, spread the infestation.**

Interesting Facts About Head Lice

- More common in children
- Less common in black children than in white children
- More common in girls than in boys
- Not known to spread disease
- Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home have NOTHING to do with getting head lice

Does the child get excluded from group settings in school?

NO

- No need to send child home early
- Successful treatment should kill crawling lice

REFER

- Refer children with lice for treatment at the end of the day
- Send a letter home with the child with instructions for treatment
- Successful treatment should kill crawling lice
- ZMCHD can provide education

AVOID

- Avoid any activity that involves head-to-head contact with other children
- Avoid sharing of any head gear

Controlling Head Lice and Treatments to Avoid

Certain medications can kill lice and nits, and should be used every 2 weeks until no lice or knits are found. Lice and nits can also be removed by combing them out of wet hair with a special fine-toothed comb.

Common household remedies (salad oils, mayonnaise, petroleum jelly) are NOT effective. The use of Kerosene is not only NOT effective, but also dangerous.