

What Can We Do About Head Lice and Deer Ticks?

The following guidance on head lice and deer ticks includes input from the Guilderland Central School District Physician, the School Nurses and the Buildings and Grounds Department.

Head Lice

The topic of head lice always makes people uncomfortable. For years people looked at lice as a sign of poor hygiene, which is far from the truth. Anyone can get head lice and they are common among children age 3 to 12. Head lice are not a health hazard and they do not spread disease. That is why the American Academy of Pediatrics feels it is wrong to send children home from school. The old “no-nit” policies in schools cause students to miss school unnecessarily.

Recommendations for parents:

- Parents should check their children frequently, especially if you notice them scratching their heads.
- If you find head lice on your child call your physician for recommended treatment. Notify your school nurse.
- Treat your child as recommended by your physician. Your child may return to school the following day. **Continue daily checks.**
- Retreat in 7-10 days. This, along with nit removal helps prevent reoccurrence.
- If a child is found to have live head lice at school he or she will be sent home to be treated and allowed to return the next day. Periodic checks of your child by the school nurse may be done over the next two weeks to watch for reoccurrence.
- If **nits only** are found on your child, he/she will be allowed to return to class and the school nurse will notify you.
- If there is more than one case of lice reported in a class the nurse will check the rest of the class and a written (paper) notice will be sent home with the students of that class.



Please note the following information:

- Head lice do not fly or jump.
- Head lice usually survive for one day or less away from the scalp at room temperature.
- Adult lice are about the size of a sesame seed and tan or grayish white in color.
- The tiny eggs or nits, which have a tear drop shape, are hard to remove because they are firmly attached to the hair shaft and do not brush away like dandruff or debris.
- Transmission most often occurs by direct head to head contact with the infested person but can also occur through contact of personal belongings such as hats, combs and brushes.

Children come in close contact not only in school but during play with peers, sleepovers, sporting activities, etc. It is important for parents to check their children often.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) “head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed.” While we stand firmly behind our school district’s cleaning regiment, the CDC insists that when combating head lice “you don’t need to spend a lot of time or money on housecleaning activities.”

Our Buildings and Grounds department follows these CDC recommendations “to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture:

1. Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, the risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug or carpet or furniture is very small.
2. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.”

(Taken from - <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>)

Treatment Recommendations from the NYS Department of Health:



“Medicated shampoos or cream rinses containing pyrethrins or permethrin are preferred for treating people with head lice. Products containing pyrethrins, permethrin or malathion are available over-the-counter, but those containing lindane or malathion are available only through a physician's prescription. (Again, call your physician for recommended treatment.)

Lindane-based shampoos are not recommended for infants, young children, pregnant women, lactating women, the elderly, and persons with HIV or seizure disorders, persons who have very irritated skin or sores where the lidane will be applied and persons who weigh less than 110 pounds.

Nit combs are available to help remove nits from hair. Dose and duration of shampoo treatment should be followed carefully according to label instructions.”

(Taken from - http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/pediculosis/fact_sheet.htm)

Ticks and Lyme Disease



“Lyme disease is caused by bacteria transmitted by the deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*). Lyme disease may cause symptoms affecting the skin, nervous system, heart and/or joints of an individual.

People who spend time in grassy and wooded environments are at an increased risk of exposure. The chances of being bitten by a deer tick are greater during times of the year when ticks are most active. Young deer ticks, called nymphs, are active from mid-May to mid-August and are about the size of poppy seeds. Adult ticks, which are approximately the size of sesame seeds, are most active from March to mid-May and from mid-August to November. Both nymphs and adults can transmit Lyme disease.

Not all deer ticks are infected with the bacteria that cause Lyme disease. Ticks can become infected if they feed on small animals that are infected. The disease can be spread when an infected tick bites a person and stays attached for a period of time. In most cases, the tick must be attached for 36 hours or more before the bacteria can be transmitted. Lyme disease does not spread from one person to another.

When in tick-infested habitat - wooded and grassy areas - take special precautions to prevent tick bites, such as wearing light-colored clothing (for easy tick discovery) and tucking pants into socks and shirt into pants. Check after every two to three hours of outdoor activity for ticks on clothing or skin. Brush off any ticks on clothing before skin attachment occurs. A thorough check of body surfaces for attached ticks should be done at the end of the day. If removal of attached ticks occurs within 36 hours, the risk of tick-borne infection is minimal.

Repellents can be effective at reducing bites from ticks that can transmit disease. But their use is not without risk of health effects, especially if repellents are applied in large amounts or improperly.”

(Taken from - http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/fact_sheet.htm)

Why not apply pesticides?

According to New York State Education Department - “pesticide applications always have the potential to contaminate the school or work environment and expose staff and students to pesticide residues.” (Taken from - <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/facplan/IPM/IPMNeighborNotificationDocument.htm>)



“Under amendments to the State Education Law (Section 409-k) and Social Services Law (Section 390-g), no school or day care center can apply pesticides to any playgrounds, turf, or athletic or playing fields.” (Taken from - <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/41822.html>)

To reduce the presence of ticks in our playgrounds and school yards without using pesticides, we follow these recommendations from the NYS Department of Health:

- Keep lawns mowed and edges trimmed.
- Clear brush, leaf litter and tall grass.
- In the fall, clear all leaf and garden litter, where ticks can live in the winter.
- Locate children's swing sets and other play equipment in sunny, dry areas, away from the woods where ticks can be abundant.

(Taken from- http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/fact_sheet.htm)



If you have medical questions regarding ticks or lice please contact your school nurse or your primary physician. For facility related questions, please contact Cliff Nooney, Buildings and Grounds Supervisor (518) 861-5246.

Thank you.