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## A letter from your school nurse

### Dear Parent or Guardian:

As your child's school nurse, I want to welcome your child back to school for what promises to be a productive and exciting new school year. I also want to make you aware of a "pesky" situation that impacts schools around the country, often as the school year begins.

Pediculosis, or head lice, is a condition that each year affects approximately 6 to 12 million children between the ages of 3 and 12 years of age, and about 1 in every 100 elementary school children. 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 the color of your child's hair. Eggs, or nits, are smaller and silver in color.

Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and they do not transmit disease. Lice do not hop, jump, or fly; and the only way they get from person to person is direct contact with infested hair (most common) or by sharing personal items such as combs, brushes, or caps (less common.)

The most common symptom of head lice is itching and head scratching, particularly at night. Red bite marks or sores may also be noticed on the scalp. If you suspect that your child has head lice, please contact your health care provider or school nurse. Safe and effective products to treat head lice are available both over the counter and by doctor's prescription. It is important to follow the directions carefully. In addition, use a fine-tooth comb or special metal nit comb to help remove the eggs (nits) from the hair. You can also check your child's scalp weekly when the hair is wet to see if there are any new head lice. Parents should also wash in hot water or dry-clean all recently worn clothing, hats, used bedding, and towels. Personal care items such as combs, brushes and hair clips should also be washed in hot water. Toys, such as stuffed animals, can be put into a tightly closed plastic bag for 7 days or placed in a hot dryer for 20 minutes to kill the lice. I know that even the best of families can catch lice, and most of us who are parents have been through it at least once ourselves.

My goal as school nurse is to provide you with information you need to ensure that your child's education is not disrupted, but remains the most positive experience possible. I hope you find this information useful, and I send best wishes to your child for a rewarding school year. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance to you or your child in any way.

For a healthy school,

School Nurse