

DPS STUDENT, FAMILY & COMMUNITY SERVICES

GUIDANCE & PROCEDURES

HEAD LICE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Head lice are tiny insects that can appear on people's scalp. Once there, they reproduce quickly. They lay eggs and cause severe itching of the scalp. Head lice do not spread disease. They do not live on animals. It does not matter if the hair is long or short, dirty or clean. Children and adults of any age and race can get head lice.

Policy and research from the Harvard School of Epidemiology, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses all agree there is no value to excluding children from school for nits only. Children will only be sent home if live lice are seen.

- Pollack, Richard J., *Head Lice: Information and Frequently Asked Questions*
<http://identify.us.com/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics, *Head Lice: Clinical Report*, PEDIATRICS Vol. 110 No. 3 September 2002, pp. 638-643, NOTE: A Statement of Reaffirmation of this policy was published May 1, 2009, Retrieved from the WWW June 30, 2010
<http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;110/3/638#SEC9>
- National Association of School Nurses, Position Statement, *Pediculosis in the School Community*, (2004). Retrieved from the WWW June 30, 2010 at
<http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>

HOW YOU CAN GET LICE

- Lice do not jump or fly
- People must have their heads close together so the lice can crawl (short distances only) from one head to another
- Lice may also be spread by sharing combs, hats, scarves, sweaters, coats, brushes and pillows
- Lice can crawl from clothing or personal items that are stored in one place such as piles of hats or coats at friends' homes, school or meeting places
- Lice & their eggs can live on upholstered chairs, carpet or car seats

WHAT LICE AND THEIR EGGS ("NITS") LOOK LIKE

- **Lice are:**
 - Small insects that are about 1/8" to 1/10" long (about this (-) long)
 - They are grayish white with dark edges
 - They have three legs on each side of their body
 - They run quickly from light, so can be difficult to see
 - On the head, lice can live for 28-30 days
 - Lice need about 5 blood meals a day to live
 - They die within 24-48 hours if they fall off the scalp

- **Nits are:**
 - Lice eggs. They look like a sesame seed
 - Nits are attached by a glue-like substance to the hair, which makes them very hard to remove. To tell the difference, remember that dry skin or lint will brush off easily; nits will not come off easily
 - Nits are laid at the end of a hair within ¼” of the scalp. The nit will move up the hair as the hair grows
 - Nits hatch in 7-10 days
 - Nits that are more than ½” from the scalp have hatched and are no longer alive
- Most people have had lice up to a month before they are discovered
- Watch for children scratching their head a lot
- Use a pencil to separate the hair into parts. Look through the hair carefully, especially at the back of the neck, top of the head and behind the ears for nits. Look for movement especially at the neck and behind the ears

WHO TO TREAT

- **Check** all family members for lice and nits
- **Treat** only people who actually have live lice or nits. The treatment will not prevent people from getting lice

HOW TO TREAT

Several different medicated shampoos can be purchased at the drugstore. You may wish to ask your doctor for a product that requires a prescription

- Read the directions on the shampoo carefully. Some will need to be put on **dry** hair. It is important to use the entire bottle
- The medicated shampoos kill live lice. It is not certain that any of them will kill nits
- A fine toothcomb (metal works best) must be used after the shampoo to help remove the nits
- Automatically repeat the treatment once in 7 – 10 days

IMPORTANT:

- Follow the product directions and the advice of your doctor
- It is very important not to use any treatment more often than suggested
- **Never** use home remedies such as kerosene to treat lice

HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

The following household procedures are necessary to prevent re-infestation and must be repeated with each treatment.

- Clothing, linens, etc., that have been in contact with the head of the person with lice, should be washed in hot water for 20 minutes
- OR put items in a clothes dryer at high heat for at least 20 minutes
- Clothing which is not washable should be dry cleaned OR placed in a plastic bag and sealed for 10 days
- Stuffed animals should be sealed in a plastic bag for 10 days
- Soak combs and brushes using one of the following methods:
 - Solution of medicated shampoo (2 tablespoons to 1-cup water) for one (1) hour
 - Heat pan of water on the stove until just before the water starts to boil. Remove from heat and immediately place combs and brushes in heated water and leave for 5-10 minutes
- Mattresses, pillows, upholstered furniture and carpets should be cleaned thoroughly with a vacuum cleaner.

PREVENTION

- Please check your child's scalp often for nits and live lice
- Instruct family members not to share combs, brushes, hats and other personal items
- Children may come back to school after being treated for lice. Only nits that are within 1/4" from the scalp must be removed