
Students

Administrative Procedure - Measures to Control the Spread of Head Lice at School

The Glen Ellyn School District head lice procedure is in line with evidence based practice and is based on recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of School Nurses, and Richard Pollack, Ph.D., entomology expert at Harvard University.

Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

“Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice.

Head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Both the American Association of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses advocate that "no-nit" policies should be discontinued. "No-nit" policies that require a child to be free of nits before they can return to schools should be discontinued for the following reasons:

- Many nits are more than ¼ inch from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and very unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as casings.
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.
- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families and communities far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
- Misdiagnosis of nits is very common during nit checks conducted by nonmedical personnel.”

National Association of School Nurses: <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>

“It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that the management of pediculosis (infestation by head lice) should not disrupt the educational process. No disease is associated with head lice, and in-school transmission is considered to be rare. When transmission occurs, it is generally found among younger-age children with increased head-to-head contact (Frankowski & Bocchini, 2010).

Children found with live head lice should remain in class, but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others. The school nurse should contact the parents to discuss treating the child at the conclusion of the school day (Frankowski & Bocchini, 2010). Students with nits only should not be excluded from school (American School Health Association, 2005, Frankowski & Bocchini, 2010, Pollack, Kiszewski & Spielman, 2000), although further monitoring for signs of re-infestation is appropriate. It may be appropriate to screen other children who have had close head-to-head contact with a student with an active infestation, such as household family members, but classroom-wide or school-wide screening is not merited (Andresen & McCarthy, 2009). In cases that involve head lice, as in all school health issues, it is vital that the school nurse prevent stigmatizing and maintain the student’s privacy as well as the family’s right to confidentiality (Gordon, 2007).”

When a student is found to have live lice:

- 1) The parent is notified by phone if possible and information related to detection and elimination of head lice can be provided at that time or sent home with the student in a sealed envelope.
- 2) The student is **not** sent home from school, unless the parent desires to pick up the student. Confidentiality must be maintained.
- 3) The parent is instructed that the student must be treated before returning to school.
- 4) It is appropriate to have the student's head checked upon return to school. If live lice are found, the student will not return to the classroom. Parent will be instructed to remove all live lice before the student returns to school.
- 5) If nits are found, the parent is notified to keep combing them out with a lice comb at least daily for the next two weeks.
- 6) Follow up head checks may be done by trained school staff to confirm lice management efforts.
- 7) Record these head checks in Skyward as an office visit.
- 8) If live lice are found, the process of notification to parents/guardians begins again.

When a student is found to have nits in the hair (no live lice detected):

- 1) The parent is notified by phone if possible and encouraged to comb nits out at least daily for the next two weeks.
- 2) The student is **not** sent home from school.
- 3) Information related to detection and elimination of head lice is sent home with the student in a sealed envelope.
- 4) Record these head checks in Skyward as an office visit, noting that no live lice were found.
- 5) If future checks reveal an increased number of nits present or it is obvious to the screener that the student's hair has not been treated (live lice are present), the parent will be contacted for follow up and support.

When to check beyond the identified student with live lice or nits:

- 1) Determine if the student has siblings in the district. If yes, then check the siblings.
- 2) If a student is found to have live head lice, they are to be documented on the confidential lice log and parent notification is to occur as previously stated.
- 3) Full classroom screenings for head lice are **not** done unless deemed necessary by the School Nurse." Screening for nits alone is not an accurate way of predicting which children will become infested, and screening for live lice has not been proven to have a significant effect on the incidence of head lice in a school community over time." (AAP Policy, September 2002).

Classroom environment

- 1) The classroom is only one of many environments where head lice can be transmitted. According to the CDC, most transmissions occur in the home environment (friends, sleepovers, camp, etc).
- 2) Past practice of separating coats, backpacks, etc have been found to not be important, as healthy head lice do not stray from the head. A head louse which is on an inanimate object is most likely a dying head louse.
- 3) No environmental pesticide treatments (sprays, pesticide bombs) are to be used.
- 4) Encourage students to avoid sharing hats, combs, and pillows; and to avoid head-to-head contact.
- 5) The School Nurse will use professional judgment to determine when unusual measures are necessary to respond to extraordinary cases.

Notification Procedures

- 1) Parents will be notified by a letter sent home with their student if there is a case of live head lice discovered in the elementary classroom. Because middle school students change classes and are much less likely to have head to head contact, a letter will not be sent except as deemed necessary by the School Nurse and building principal.
- 2) In the rare case that a student is to be excluded (see Exclusion Procedures) a notice will be given to the parent in person if possible, and a phone contact will be attempted and documented. If there is concern about the delivery of the notification, it can be sent by certified mail.

Exclusion Procedures

Note: the presence of severe infestations of untreated head lice can be disruptive to the educational environment.

- 1) In the rare case that a student has either a) chronic head lice infestation or 2) severe head lice infestation that is disruptive to the learning environment, the School Nurse will be consulted.
- 2) If in the nurse's professional judgment it is determined that Exclusion needs to be considered, the nurse will consult with the building principal about implementing Exclusion. This measure will only be taken with careful consideration.
- 3) With chronic head lice cases the nurse will obtain the documentation of repeated and unsuccessful head lice management measures (from Lice Log and Skyward Office Visits).
- 4) The parent will be notified as in #2 above (Notification Procedures).
- 5) The return of a student after Exclusion will necessitate a head check in the main office with evidence of progress in head lice management. Evidence is elimination of live lice and a decrease in the number of nits.
- 6) It may be appropriate in the judgment of the School Nurse to monitor progress of lice management over a period of time. The goal is to support the family in eradication of this pest.

Documentation

- 1) All students identified with head lice or nits will have their names and the dates the lice/nits were found recorded in a confidential lice log maintained in the health room. The confidential lice log is considered a “working” document, is not FERPA compliant, and should be shredded at the end of the school year.
- 2) If a student is checked in the Health Room for head lice, that head check is to be documented as an office visit in Skyward.

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