



### **Policy for Evaluation/Control of Pediculosis in School**

The control of lice outbreaks is directly related to the staff, student and family education. Lice do not spread disease and are not considered a public health issue. Lice are small parasites that require warmth and blood to live. They cannot fly or hop. They are not easily spread and generally require head-to-head contact. Lice cannot crawl on a smooth surface and cannot live without a host. Nits are the eggs laid by the adult female louse, usually at the base of the hair shaft near the scalp. A first time lice infestation is usually 30 days old by the time it is first diagnosed since it takes that long for itching and other symptoms to occur. Personal hygiene or cleanliness at home or in school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

The Center for Disease Control, the American Association of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses do not support excluding children from school for lice or nits. The school nurses remain to be the best screeners and educators for lice infestations. New evidenced-based practices provide best policy and procedures for dealing with a head lice infestation in the school setting. Upon receiving a complaint about lice or upon suspecting a lice infestation, the school nurse will carefully examine the scalp of the child in question and maintain confidentiality.

- Gloves do not need to be worn.
- Hair bands and clips may need to be removed
- Pediculosis sticks may be used to assist in separating the hair
- The examiner will look carefully for active/moving lice, nymphs (immature lice) and nits no farther than a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the scalp. A finding of lice or nits would indicate an active infestation.

If an active infestation is found, every effort will be made to send the child home for treatment. If the parent cannot be contacted, the student may return to class until the parent arrives or dismissal.

- Contacts (close friends, siblings) will be screened if an active case is found.
- It is not necessary or advised to screen the entire class or school.
- Parents will be given a printed copy of lice treatment instructions and educational material on head lice.
- Parents or guardian will be encouraged to contact the child's health care provider.

- Students with an active infestation will be permitted to return to school the morning after they have been treated and be checked by the school nurse.
- Parents must provide proof of treatment, such as a box top or store receipt.
- Students **will not** be excluded from school.

The presence of nits (lice eggs) more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the scalp will not be considered an active infestation and does not require exclusion or treatment. Parents will be notified and will be given instructions on nit removal. Treatment of head lice should never be initiated unless there is a clear diagnosis of head lice.

\* If the diagnosis is made solely on the presence of eggs, health personnel must determine whether the eggs are hatched or un-hatched. The presence of only hatched eggs (lice not observed and empty egg shells) indicates past infestation and does not constitute grounds for treatment, re-treatment, or suspension from school or refused admission to school. On the other hand, the presence of un-hatched eggs indicates an active infestation that requires treatment. Since head lice attach their eggs to the hair shaft very close to the scalp, un-hatched eggs will normally be within 1/4 inch of the scalp's surface; hatched eggs will be 1/2 inch or more from the scalp.

\* Guidelines for a School Based Program for Control of Lice Infestation and Other Related Condition. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Health

- Printed lice information will be available for parents/guardians. Information may be sent home with all students in specific grade or grades after consulting with administration.
- Follow up care will be made available to the families.
- The staff will be provided with detailed lice education material and /or short educational presentation by the school nurse.
- Families will be advised to properly wash and dry clothing, bedding and other personal items.
- Parents will be instructed not to over treat the student and to only follow the product's instructions.
- The school nurse may use other outlets such as a Health Room Update Letter, to educate families.