

PENN DELCO SCHOOL DISTRICT HEAD LICE POLICY- 2015

Rationale: Millions of school children miss countless days of learning each year in the United States due to outdated “nit free” policies of school districts. Current research from the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses and the Centers for Disease Control indicates that head lice do not contribute to any disease process, are not commonly contracted at school, and are primarily spread via direct head to head contact among young children. Students should not be excluded from school and the educational process should not be disrupted due to the presence of head lice or nits. In most situations, the child has probably had lice for a month or more and possesses little risk to others. Any exposure to his or her classmates has already occurred, and immediate exclusion provides no further prevention. No exclusion from any activities is necessary, including riding the school bus or participating in sports. Research does not support a “nit free” school policy. The Penn Delco nurses have reviewed the research and clinical reports in order to update our policy in managing head lice in our schools.

Goals:

- to educate families on treatment and prevention
- to minimize student absenteeism
- to minimize parents/guardians taking time off from work
- to prevent emotional distress to students and their families

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny wingless parasites that attach to the head and neck hairs to feed from human hosts.

How do head lice reproduce?

The female head lice glue their eggs or nits onto the hair shaft near the scalp. The nits are resistant to pesticides and shampoos and are difficult to remove without special combs. After proper treatment, nits can be pulled out by hand. Nits that fall out of the hair are not alive and are therefore not of concern.

How does someone catch head lice?

Head lice do not fly, hop or jump from person to person. They can only propel themselves by pulling along the shafts of hair. They are primarily transmitted from **direct head to head contact**. Nits or eggs are not contagious. They are much harder to get than a cold, the flu, pinkeye, or strep throat.

Classroom

Research by the AAP and the CDC shows that most head lice are acquired outside of the school setting. Classroom transmission is **EXTREMELY RARE**. Therefore, school wide screenings are not recommended and have not proven to be effective. It is a waste of valuable teaching time. It is more appropriate to check family members, overnight guests, and friends who spend a lot of time together.

In observance of the evidence-based research, and to promote health, well-being, and the academic success of the student, these steps should be implemented for a suspected case of head lice:

- Students suspected of having head lice will be sent to the nurse for evaluation.
- A thorough inspection for live lice and nits will be completed.
- If live lice are found, the student will be sent home for treatment.
- If no live lice are found, the student may remain in school and the parent/guardian will be notified by phone, letter, or email by the end of the school day.
- The parent/guardian will be provided with information about inspection, removal and treatment of head lice. The school district's informational brochure will also be included.
- Links to the CDC, AAP and NASN websites will be available on the nurse's web page for additional reference.
- Students are expected to return to school immediately following the initial treatment.
- Parents are expected to remove all live lice before the student returns to school the next day. The student will be checked in the morning by the nurse before returning to class.
- A second treatment is required to be administered. Please refer to manufacturer's instructions: usually 7-10 days after the initial treatment.
- The best way to prevent or interrupt a chronic lice problem is by regular checks by parents.

What are Head Lice?

- Head lice are tiny, wingless creatures that live in the head
- Head lice are about the size of a sesame seed and have six legs with tiny claws that can attach to hair.
- Head lice can change color from light brown to gray and are hard to see.
- They do not jump or fly. They are spread by head-to-head contact.
- Head lice eggs are called nits. They are small and white and attach to hair shafts.
- A nit is about the size of a pin head.

Myths about Head Lice

- Using gasoline, kerosene, and paint thinner or insect repellent may harm your child but not get rid of the lice.
- Hair gels, hairspray or dandruff shampoo will not kill lice or prevent eggs from hatching.
- Your pets and other animals don't carry head lice and can't contract head lice from people.
- Lice don't hide in your home like other tiny insects so treating homes or schools with pesticides would waste money and may harm your child.
- Do not use hair dryers to kill lice or eggs- the temperature would need to be so high it could cause serious burns.
- Head lice do not transmit diseases

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- Nurse will recheck student as needed to ensure there is no possible re-infestation.

PENN DELCO SCHOOL DISTRICT

HEAD LICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES



PENN DELCO CERTIFIED SCHOOL NURSES

Ginamarie Capuano, RN- Sun Valley
Betsy King, RN- Aston/Parkside
Kristie Pennoni, RN- Pennell/Coebourn
Christina Saunders, RN- Northey

How will I know my child has lice?

- Itching is the first sign of head lice. Check your child's head and scalp all over and especially behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck when scratching begins.
- Look for live lice and their eggs or "nits" that attach to individual hairs.
- If you know of another child with head lice, be alert that your child may contract lice, too. There is no incubation period. When live lice move from one child's head to another they can begin to lay eggs immediately.
- Children get lice from other children. They move from child to child through head to head contact. Most cases of head lice are spread from sleepovers, camping trips, and sharing personal hygiene items. Most cases are NOT spread in school.

HELP!! HOW DO I GET RID OF HEAD LICE?

- Relax....head lice are a nuisance not a health problem!
- You can take care of your child's head lice problem at home without a visit to the doctor. Treatment should be with shampoo or cream rinse approved by the FDA that can be purchased without a prescription at the pharmacy.
- You also have the option to take your child to a business that specializes in lice treatment and removal. They will give you a certificate to bring to school that your child is lice free.
- Use the OTC product EXACTLY as the manufacturer recommends.
- The OTC product comes with a fine tooth comb- use this comb to remove the lice and nits. After treatment, check hair and comb with the nit comb every 2 days. Continue combing two times/week for 3 weeks.
- Retreat in 7-10 days according to manufacturer's directions.
- Vacuum house and car thoroughly
- Wash all bed linens and clothing in hot water
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 10 minutes

RESOURCES

CDC- <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/>

NASN-
<http://www.nasn.org/ToolsResources/HeadLicePediculosisCapitis/HeadfirstLiceLessons>

Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/lice/basics/treatment/con-20021627>

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/110/3/638.full>

