

The information that follows was given to the District by the Orange County Department of Health. Sources for this information were:

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/factsheet_head_lice.htm

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/107/5/1011>

What are nits?

Nits are small, about the size of a knot in a thread. They are very difficult to see and are often mistaken for dandruff. They are usually found at the base of the hair shaft, usually behind the ears or at the back of the neck. They are oval in shape and are usually yellow and brown. White nits are actually empty egg casings that have already hatched. Nits are attached to the hair shaft with a very strong glue or cement.

Should schools adopt a no-nit policy?

Nits alone, without live lice, are not contagious. No-nit policies enacted by schools are unnecessary and counterproductive. No-nit policies lead to unnecessary pesticide exposure, more days of missed school than are necessary and unnecessary missed work for parents.

What should you do about nits?

If there are nits but no live lice, comb out the nits and wait to see if any come back. If they do reappear, there are some live lice on your child and you will need to seek more treatment.

One of the simplest ways to remove nits is to “nitpick,” or remove them manually with a comb. This can be effective, but it is time-consuming and tedious, and may have to be repeated daily for several weeks.

Vinegar can dissolve the cement and help to loosen the bonds between the nit and the hair shaft. This may make nitpicking easier. All natural herbal remedies help to loosen the nits and break down the nits and the lice exoskeletons. Unlike pesticides, they generally have no harmful side effects.

Remember, nits alone are not indicative of a lice infestation. Before you apply dangerous pesticides to your child’s head, take the time to see if there are any live lice.