

R 5310.01 HEAD LICE MANAGEMENT REGULATION

Head lice have infested human beings for over 9,000 years and remain a public health issue despite modern remedies. Head lice are tiny, wingless parasitic insects that survive on tiny amounts of blood drawn from the human scalp. They cannot survive for more than 48 hours without a human host. They are spread by head-to-head contact and are a very common problem, especially for children 3-12 years of age.

Pediculosis (head lice) represents one of the most common communicable childhood diseases, and problems occur year round. However, head lice are frequently diagnosed by school nurses during the school year; thus many parents mistakenly believe that the school is the source of infestation/reinfestation.

Although head lice are not in themselves dangerous, the itching and scratching related to infestation can cause skin irritation and infection. Lice do not cause or spread disease, but are contagious, and their presence causes great annoyance.

Because the products used to treat head lice are very toxic and are not 100% effective, schools and parents must work together to control head lice.

Stafford Township School District has always had an informal "No Nit Policy". Any child found with active lice or nits is sent home to be treated. Following treatment with an appropriate lice-killing product and removal of all nits, the child may return to school. The child may not attend class or ride the bus until the school nurse has documented that the student is lice and nit-free. WITH PARENT COOPERATION, THIS CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED ON THE SAME DAY THE LICE/NITS ARE DETECTED. With appropriate and prompt treatment, the child should not have an extended absence from school. Without a "No Nit Policy" schools are left with a "hit-or-miss" approach; there is no way to follow up on treatment and nit removal at home. It is important to acknowledge head lice as a problem when raising or caring for children. A "No Nit Policy" encourages each family to share in the responsibility for minimizing head lice infestations through screening, early detection, accurate identification and thorough removal of lice and nits.

Administrative Advantages of the No Nit Policy: Having a No Nit Policy in place makes the task of the school or child care facility more realistic and less subjective. If nits are present, the child is dismissed for follow-up. As an administrative policy, it helps parents to understand the importance of their role in head lice control.



While absence from school or child care is a loss of educational opportunity and may be a problem for working parents, readmitting an infested child is not a solution. A policy for head lice must consider not only the infested child, but also his peers who have been successfully treated or not yet infested. The No Nit Policy is the sensible approach to serve and protect all the children in the group.

The following strategies support the success of the No-Nit Policy:

1. Proactive community education
2. Screening and early detection
3. Manual removal of all lice and nits
4. Temporary dismissal of children with head lice or nits

The school's role is to educate the public and establish consistent guidelines to minimize outbreaks of lice. Early intervention in the school provides the needed assurance to parents, children and staff that everything possible is being done to prevent new outbreaks when children return to groups where close contact is inevitable.

At school, when the District becomes aware of a reported incident of lice, all children in the class will be checked. When the District becomes aware of ten or more reported incidents of lice, all children in the school will be checked within a five day period.

In addition, the District will provide information to parents/guardians when reports occur within school and will provide information about how to treat lice and prevent future outbreaks. If an incident of lice is reported in a child's class, a letter will be sent home to parents/guardians of all students within that class. If five or more incidents of lice are reported in a school, then a letter will be sent home to parents/guardians of students within that school.

Families are encouraged to carry out the most effective prevention measures (vigilance, screening at home) at all times and the safest, most thorough (removal of all nits) control measures possible. The school environment is one of mutual assurance that the child enters a group setting that supports a head lice control program.

The Food and Drug Administration recommends repeating chemical treatments in 7-10 days because none of the available treatment products are 100% effective against lice eggs (nits). ONE FEMALE LOUSE CAN LAY 50-150 EGGS IN HER LIFETIME. Remaining viable nits will hatch live lice, reinfesting the child and/or infesting others. Mechanical removal of all nits is necessary to prevent unnecessary chemical treatments and to assure control.

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