

Guidelines for Pediculosis (Head Lice)

Pediculosis (head lice) is a common community issue. While it is a nuisance, it is not infectious and is not disease carrying. Evidence-based prevention measures include assisting parents with the identification of lice and nits, as well as teaching students, parents, and staff effective prevention measures.

School notification letters are no longer being sent home. Communications highlighting cases of head lice have been shown to increase community anxiety and social stigma, while having little effect on the prevention of lice infestations. Greenwich Public Schools Public Health Nurses do not provide mass screenings for head lice. Checks have not been shown to have a significant effect on the incidence of lice in schools. Our guidelines meet current standards in public health, scientific research and the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC).

Here are a few facts regarding pediculosis:

- Live lice move very quickly and may even move to the top of the head when you examine the lower areas, such as the nape of neck, behind ears, etc.
- Lice are grayish, do not have wings, and are about 1/16th inch long. They are not like fleas. They do not jump or fly, but crawl very fast.
- Nits (lice egg cases) are stuck tightly to the hair shaft and are not easily removed.
- Nits and lice are not carried on your pets.

If lice are discovered at school, a phone call will be made to the family notifying them of the presence and recommendation to treat. Students may stay in school (unless the parent opts to take them home early). Students should be treated at home PRIOR to returning to school. Current medical recommendations include:

- Complete one course of an over-the-counter product (i.e. Pyrethrins), and repeat on Day 7
- If still infested, treat with one course of a prescription product (e.g., Ovide)
- If still infested, use only mechanical removal, as further use of pesticides is not recommended and may be harmful
- Families may consult with their medical providers when determining best course of treatment

Additional resources can be found here:

American Association of Pediatrics:

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/4/e2022059282/189566/Head-Lice>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>

National Association of School Nurses:

<https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-head-lice>