



## Jamestown Public School District #1

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### Head Lice Management

#### Background

- Head lice are not a health hazard and nor are they responsible for the spread of disease. Infestation is a nuisance rather than a major threat to the student's well-being.
- For complete information regarding head lice treatment and eradication please refer to "Head Lice - A Lousy Problem" available at [https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Files/HSC/SHS/Head\\_Lice/headlicebooklet.pdf](https://www.health.nd.gov/sites/www/files/documents/Files/HSC/SHS/Head_Lice/headlicebooklet.pdf)

#### Definition

- Head lice (**Pediculosis humanus capitis**) are parasitic insects that feed on blood from the human scalp. The adult louse is very small (about the size of a sesame seed), has six legs, a diamond-shaped head, and an elongated body, is flat, wingless, and crawls. It cannot fly or jump. Lice are often hard to see; they range in color from red, brown, black to gray-white. Lice eggs, called "nits," attach to the hair shaft until they hatch into live lice.
- Head lice outbreaks are common in the United States among all socioeconomic groups of children between the ages of three to 12 years. Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene or unclean homes or schools. Lice and nits may be found on the human head, eyebrows, or eyelashes, but usually locate on the scalp, particularly around and behind ears and near the neckline at the back of the head.

#### Mode of Transportation

- Transmission occurs most commonly by direct contact with the head of an already infested person. Contact is common during play (slumber parties, bed sharing, sport activities or games). The most rapid spread of head lice occurs through the home because of the close proximity of family members. The risk of transmission at school is low (AAP Clinical Report, 2015).
- It is uncommon for lice to be spread from inanimate objects such as hats, combs, brushes, helmets, headphones, or movie theatre seats. Head lice are not able to hold onto these materials or survive without the warmth and blood source of a human scalp. Head lice cannot survive away from the scalp for more than 2-3 days at room temperature. Nits are not easily transmitted because they are glued to the hair shaft.

#### Incubation Period

- Head lice eggs (nits) normally hatch in seven to 12 days. Mature head lice are capable of laying eggs nine to 12 days after hatching. The adult life span is about 1 month.

#### Infectious Period

- Head lice can be transmitted as long as the lice (not nits) live. By removing nits, the possibility of hatching new lice is minimized. Nits need warmth from the scalp to remain viable; nits found more than a quarter inch away from the scalp have already hatched or will never hatch. Successful treatment should kill live lice. All family members should be checked and treated at the same time.

## Symptoms

1. Itching on the head and scalp;
2. A tickling feeling on the head or in the hair;
3. Live lice;
4. Nits (lice eggs) attached to hairs;
5. Irritated spots on the head caused by the child scratching;
6. Irritability and trouble sleeping.

## Protocol for Identification and Exclusion of Students with Active Infestations

- Immediate or long-term exclusion of students with head lice is no longer recommended as best practice from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the North Dakota Department of Health. Students with an active infestation are referred to parents. However, if students are not picked up by parents, they will be removed from the classroom but may remain in the school and return to the classroom the next day after the appropriate treatment has been completed and no live lice are present.
1. If a student is identified as having symptoms of head lice as defined above, a trained staff member will proceed with a head-lice check.
  2. If a live louse is found on the head of a student, the student will remain in a designated area outside of the classroom to prevent head-to-head contact with other students. If nits are found but no live lice are detected, the student may return to the classroom.
  3. School personnel will notify the parents/guardians of the child when a live louse is identified and may call if nits within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of the scalp have been identified.
  4. If the parent is unable to pick up a child with live lice, they are able to remain in the school until the end of the school day, but will not return to their classroom. They may remain in the classroom if only nits were found.
  5. The first-time live lice or nits within  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of scalp are identified, the parent will be provided with treatment directions and a treatment verification form. For additional identifications, treatment directions will be offered to the family.
  6. In order for the child who had live lice to return to the classroom a trained staff member will complete a head-lice check to ensure no live lice are present. The treatment verification form is expected to be returned to the school office when the student returns. If no treatment verification form is returned, school personnel will contact family.
  7. Future head lice checks may be completed any time a child shows symptoms of head lice or after the student returns to school following an active infestation.
  8. If live lice or nits within  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the scalp are found on the child, siblings or other children suspected of having head-to-head contact with the child may also be checked.
  9. Whenever live lice are found on an elementary student, notification letters will be sent to the students in the same classroom as needed.

## Chronic Cases

- The principal, school counselor, school social worker, and/or school nurse shall work with the parent/guardian of any student who has been deemed to be a chronic case to help minimize the student's absences from school.
- A case may be considered chronic if live lice have been identified 3 or more times per semester.
- Parents may be required to be present for the head-lice checks at the request of the administrator or if treatment verification forms are not returned.
- Nothing in this policy prohibits school district personnel from reporting the suspected abuse or neglect of a student as required by law.
- SARB (Student Attendance Review Board) procedures will still be followed.