

Darien Public Schools - Department of Nursing Services

Emily Merritt ~ Director of Nursing Services

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Dear Families,

Pediculosis (head lice) is a common community issue. While head lice are a nuisance, they are not infectious and do not spread disease. Darien Public Schools promotes evidence-based prevention measures that include assisting parents with the identification of lice and nits, as well as teaching students, parents, and staff effective prevention measures.

DPS no longer sends school wide lice notification letters. 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. DPS does not provide mass screenings for head lice. "Head lice screening programs in schools have not been proven to have a significant effect on the incidence of head lice in the school setting, are not cost effective, and may stigmatize children suspected of having head lice. Education programs for families may be helpful in the management of head lice in the school setting." (AAP vl. 150, no. 4, 10.2022) This updated DPS lice management plan is within the 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).

Don't be discouraged! There are effective measures we can engage in, as a community, to prevent the spread of lice. It is important first to remember that head lice are crawling insects. They cannot jump, hop, or fly. Head lice are primarily spread from close, prolonged head-to-head contact. There is a very small chance that head lice will spread by sharing items such as combs, brushes, hats or sports helmets.

Regular (ie. weekly or as needed) home lice checks are the best way to prevent the spread of lice. A thorough check takes 5-10 minutes per child.

Helpful Hints for a thorough lice check include:

- Purchase a good lice comb (ex. LiceMeister®1) [LINK](#)
- Perform checks when hair is wet. Leave a small amount of suds from the shampoo/conditioner in your child's hair. This will help to spot lice, especially with dark hair.
- Begin inspection at the nape of the neck and then behind the ears.
- Use a magnifying glass and/or a bright light, (ex. iphone flashlight) if available.
- Place comb in hair at a downward angle close to scalp and comb continuously until you have reached the end of the hair
- Look for any movement and/or nits (eggs)
- Wipe comb / suds off on a paper towel with each comb through and look for any sign of lice
- Continue this process until you have checked your child's entire head

If lice are discovered, please treat your child PRIOR to returning to school. Current medical recommendations include:

- 1) complete one course of an over-the-counter product (i.e. Pyrethrins), and repeat on day 7
- 2) if still infested, treat with one course of a prescription product (e.g., Ovide)
- 3) if still infested, use only mechanical removal, as further use of pesticides is not recommended and may be harmful.

In school, teachers and staff have been reminded to modify activities that involve close group learning, avoiding head to head contact. We continue to uphold the no sharing of hats, brushes/combs or clothing.

Please contact your school nurse if you have any questions or concerns. Additional information can be found at the AAP website [LINK](#)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Emily Merritt".

Emily Merritt, FNP, MSN, RN
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