



Department of Nursing Services

September 2025

Dear Families,

Head lice (pediculosis) are a common issue in school communities. While they can be a nuisance, it's important to note that head lice are not dangerous, they do not spread disease, and are not a sign of poor hygiene.

At Darien Public Schools (DPS), we follow evidence-based practices for the prevention and management of head lice. Our approach includes supporting families in identifying lice and nits, and educating students, staff, and parents on effective prevention strategies. In alignment with current recommendations, DPS does not send school-wide lice notification letters. Research has shown that such notifications can lead to unnecessary anxiety and social stigma, without significantly reducing the spread of lice. Similarly, DPS does not conduct mass screenings for head lice, as studies have found these screenings to be ineffective in lowering incidence, not cost-effective, and potentially stigmatizing for students.

Instead, our updated lice management practices reflect the latest guidance from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). As noted by the AAP, "Education programs for families may be helpful in the management of head lice in the school setting" (AAP, Vol. 150, No. 4, Oct. 2022).

Don't be discouraged, we can prevent the spread of head lice together!

Head lice can be frustrating, but with consistent prevention efforts, we can minimize their spread in our school community. It's important to start with the facts: Head lice are *crawling* insects. They cannot jump, hop, or fly. They are primarily spread through close, prolonged head-to-head contact. While it's possible (though unlikely) for lice to spread through shared personal items like combs, hats, or sports helmets, this is not the main way they are transmitted.

What You Can Do at Home

The best way to help prevent lice from spreading is by doing regular lice checks at home, ideally weekly or as needed. A thorough check takes about 5–10 minutes per child.

Helpful Hints for a Thorough Lice Check:

- Use a quality lice comb (e.g., [LiceMeister®1](#))
- Perform checks on wet hair, leaving a small amount of shampoo or conditioner in to make spotting lice easier—especially on darker hair.
- Begin at the nape of the neck, then check behind the ears, which are common sites for lice.
- Use a bright light (like a phone flashlight) and/or magnifying glass, if available.
- Place the comb at a downward angle close to the scalp and comb through to the end of the hair.
- Wipe the comb on a paper towel after each stroke and check for any lice or nits (eggs).
- Continue until you've checked the entire scalp.



Department of Nursing Services

If Lice Are Found at Home

Please treat your child before returning to school. Current medical guidance recommends the following:

1. Begin with an over-the-counter treatment (e.g., a product containing pyrethrins), and repeat on Day 7.
2. If lice persist, consult your healthcare provider about a prescription treatment (e.g., Ovide).
3. If lice still remain, switch to mechanical removal only, as repeated use of pesticide treatments is not recommended and may be harmful.

If Lice Are Discovered at School

If lice are found during the school day:

1. The school nurse will contact the parent/guardian.
2. You will be advised to pick up your child and treat them using an over-the-counter lice product prior to their return to school.

What We're Doing at School

Teachers and staff are advised to modify activities to **minimize close head-to-head contact** and continue reinforcing our **no-sharing policy** for hats, combs, brushes, and clothing.

If you have questions or need support, please don't hesitate to reach out to your [school nurse](#).
For additional information and recommendations, visit the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#).

Sincerely,

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

Emily Merritt, FNP, MSN, RN
Director of Nursing Services
Darien Public Schools
203.655.3981 x2304