Head Lice Information and Management

Reardan-Edwall School District follows recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) regarding the management of head lice.

Head lice are common among school-aged children. While they can be frustrating and uncomfortable, they are not dangerous, do not spread disease, and are not related to poor hygiene or cleanliness.

Students found to have head lice do not need to be sent home immediately. Students may remain at school for the remainder of the day and may return to school after appropriate treatment has begun. The district does not follow “no-nit” policies, as research has shown these policies do not reduce the spread of lice and can result in unnecessary missed instructional time.

Families are encouraged to use safe treatment methods, follow product directions carefully, and continue regular nit combing as recommended. Extensive cleaning measures, such as fumigant sprays, are not recommended.

School nurses are available to support families, answer questions, and provide educational resources.

Head Lice Management Procedures

Standard Procedure

If a student is suspected of having head lice, they will be referred to the school nurse or designated health room staff member for assessment.

If lice or nits are identified:

- Parent/guardian will be notified by phone or email.
- Information regarding treatment and prevention may be provided.
- Parents/guardians may choose to pick up their child to begin treatment or allow the student to remain at school for the remainder of the day.
- Students may return to school once treatment has been initiated.
- Cases will be handled discreetly and confidentially to protect student privacy and dignity.
- Custodial staff may be notified to vacuum carpeted areas if needed.
- Classroom staff may temporarily remove shared fabric items such as stuffed animals or pillows when appropriate.

Teacher Responsibilities

Teachers should remain alert for possible signs of head lice and refer suspected students to the health room for evaluation.

Possible signs may include:

- Persistent itching of the scalp
- Complaints of a tickling sensation in the hair
- Visible live lice or nits attached to hair shafts
- Scratching or sores on the scalp
- Difficulty sleeping or irritability

Teachers are encouraged to:

- Discourage direct head-to-head contact among students
- Encourage students to keep personal items separate when possible

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Office and Health Room Responsibilities

School office and health room staff will:

- Maintain student confidentiality
- Follow district procedures regarding head lice management
- Provide educational support and resources to families as needed
- Coordinate with the school nurse regarding concerns or questions

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Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

Parents/guardians are encouraged to:

- Notify the school nurse if they suspect or confirm their child has head lice
- Begin treatment promptly
- Inform the school once treatment has started
- Wash recently used clothing, bedding, hats, and hair accessories using hot water and high heat drying cycles
- Soak combs, brushes, and hair accessories in hot water for at least 10 minutes

Environmental sprays or fumigants are not recommended due to limited effectiveness and potential toxicity.

Families should follow treatment product instructions carefully and contact their healthcare provider with questions regarding treatment options.

Practices Not Recommended

Reardan School District follows current evidence-based recommendations and does not utilize outdated practices that have not been shown to reduce transmission. These include:

- Routine classroom or school-wide lice screenings
- “No-nit” exclusion policies
- Immediate exclusion from school for students with lice
- Classroom notification letters identifying potential exposure

Head lice are not considered a public health hazard and should not prevent a student from attending school once treatment has begun.

Additional Resources

- CDC Head Lice Information
- American Academy of Pediatrics – Head Lice Information
- Washington State Department of Health

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