

administrative guidelines

MANAGEMENT OF HEAD LICE IN THE SCHOOL SETTING

The purpose of this Administrative Guideline is to provide educational background information, as well as screening and treatment procedures for the management of head lice in the school setting. In an effort to maintain a safe and healthy school environment, the District shall provide information to staff, parents, and students regarding the measures that can be taken to reduce the risk of contracting and the treatment of head lice. Although head lice are more of a nuisance than a health threat, effective management is done through a partnership between the school and parents.

I. Background Information

- A. Head lice are tiny insects that live only on the scalp and hair of people. They hatch from small eggs, called nits, which are attached to the individual hairs near the scalp. The nits are plump, oval and tan or brown. Once hatched, the spent eggshell, the nit, is white. The nits are firmly attached to the hair and cannot be easily moved up or down the hair. Nits may be found throughout the hair, but are most often located at the back of the scalp, behind the ears and the top of the head. Viable nits are usually found about 1/2 inch from the scalp. The eggs hatch in 7-10 days, with new lice reaching adulthood in about 10 days.
- B. The female louse is about the size of a sesame seed, can live for 21-30 days, and lays about six to eight eggs a day. The lice live by biting and sucking blood from the scalp. Lice can survive up to 24-48 hours between feedings and can do so off the body.
- C. The major symptom of head lice is itching caused by the bite of the louse. Persistent scratching of the head and back of the neck should be viewed with suspicion. Often red bite marks and scratch marks can be seen on the scalp and neck and a secondary bacterial infection can occur causing discharge and crusting. Swollen neck glands can also occur.
- D. Please note the following facts related to head lice:
 - 1. Head lice do not jump; they move from one head to another by crawling.
 - 2. Nits (eggs) cannot spread from person-to-person.
 - 3. Pets do not spread head lice.
 - 4. Head lice do not spread disease.
 - 5. Head lice are not an indicator of poor hygiene.
 - 6. Antibiotics do not eliminate head lice.
- E. The Port Washington-Saukville School District shall cooperate with state and local public health officials in establishing and maintaining appropriate health standards for the school environment, promoting the good health of students and staff, and educating staff, parents, and students in disease prevention methods and sound health practices.

II. Educational Information

- A. Educational information will be distributed 3 times annually and as needed to parents/guardians to check their child's head for lice at least weekly. If parents find a case of

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lice (either nits [eggs] or actual live lice) on a child at home, the parent should report it to the school. After the parent has provided treatment for their child, the child is allowed to return to school. While we can never assure a completely lice free environment, outbreaks may be minimized by parents and school personnel working together.

III. Screening

- A. Full school and/or classroom screenings for head lice are not supported by current medical evidence. Families are encouraged to communicate with close contacts if their child has head lice, so the contacts can check their children. A close contact includes all members of the household; those who have recently spent the night; family members who travel between households in blended families; and children who spend time with each other outside of school.

IV. Excluding and Treating Students

- A. A student found to have live lice will go home at the end of the school day to initiate treatment. The district nurse will provide the family with general information on head lice removal.
- B. If several cases are identified in a classroom, a notification letter may be sent to parents of student in the affected classroom or grade level. This decision will be made jointly between the principal and the district nurse. If at any time, there is a large outbreak of lice, a school wide a parent/guardian letter or email blast may be sent.
- C. There are several products available for treating head lice; some of which require a prescription. The treatments that are used to kill lice can be very dangerous, especially to young children or pregnant women. It is not the responsibility of the district nurse to recommend or to apply treatments. The family should work with their doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to determine the safest product for them.
- D. Combing with a nit comb and manual removal of nits is a parental responsibility. Nit removal after shampooing may be time-consuming and difficult due to their firm attachment to the hair. A solution of vinegar and water may help make removal easier. Special fine-tooth combs can be used to aid in nit removal. Combing and manual nit-removal are necessary steps and are one of the most important parts of treatment. Most treatments require re-treatment in 7-10 days.
- E. A daily head check by parents for the next ten days is advisable. If there is evidence of new nits (less than 1/4 inch from the scalp) or newly hatched lice, it may be necessary to repeat treatment. Follow the directions from the manufacturing of the product being used.
- F. In addition to treating the child, the siblings must be checked and treated, if necessary.

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- G. Students should be excluded until initial treatment is completed. Prior to re-admission to school, the parents need to notify the school office to confirm that the child has been treated. Once readmitted to school, the student should be checked daily by the parent for a 10 day period, and weekly thereafter, to ensure there has been no re-infestation.

- V. Treating the Surrounding Area (Classroom and Home) and Personal Items
 - A. Wash bedding, pillows, and clothes in HOT water and dry at HOTTEST setting for at least 20 minutes.
 - B. Items that cannot be washed (stuffed animals, pillows, etc.) can be put in a HOT dryer for 20 minutes or dry-cleaned.
 - C. Things, which cannot be washed or dried, can be sealed in plastic bags for at least 10 days.
 - D. Carpets, floors, upholstered furniture, including fabric car seats, should be thoroughly vacuumed.
 - E. It is NOT necessary to do any exterminating, spraying or fogging of the school or home.
 - F. The Washington-Ozaukee County Public Health Department may be consulted.

Legal References:

Section 118.125, 121.02(1)(a), 146.82, Wis. Stats.

N 6.03(3) Supervision and Delegation of Nursing Acts, Wis. Adm. Code

Cross References:

Board Policy 2260 – Access to Equal Educational Opportunities

Board Policy 8330 – Pupil Records

Administrative Guidelines 8330 – Release of Student’s Personal Information

National Association of School Nurses: Head Lice Management in the School Setting Position Statement

American Academy of Pediatrics: Head Lice: What Parents need to Know

The Bureau of Communicable Diseases and Emergency Response Division of Public Health, State of Wisconsin,

Department of Health Services: Wisconsin Childhood Communicable Diseases Chart

National Association of School Nurses: Head Lice Management in the School Setting Position Statement

American Academy of Pediatrics: Head Lice: What Parents need to Know

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Approved: 4/04/17

Revised: 11/07/17

The Port Washington-Saukville School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Director of Special Services, Port Washington-Saukville School District, 100 W. Monroe Street, Port Washington, WI 53074 - Duane.Woelfel@pwssd.k12.wi.us