

**Knox County Schools
Health Services**

HEAD LICE GUIDELINES

No healthy child should be excluded from or allowed to miss school time because of head lice. Our goal is to support families and keep kids where they need to be – in school!

Pediculosis (head lice) represents a common communicable childhood condition. Head lice are acquired by direct contact, head touching head, and by indirect contact through sharing combs, hats and other hair accessories. Lice do not live on household pets or in the general environment. Nits (eggs) can't survive without a host and will die within 6-20 hours; live lice will die within 24 hours without a food source. Head lice are not a serious medical condition so immediate action is unnecessary.

The average case of head lice is several weeks old before being detected. To immediately exclude a child from school cannot be justified from either a medical or social perspective and sends a negative message to the child. Screening of whole classrooms is never warranted and is not cost effective, nor has screening proven to have any effect on the incidence rate of head lice in schools. Routine education of all parents regarding the identification and management of head lice is helpful. The most effective screening is done by a parent.

Once live lice are discovered students **may** return to the classroom and be monitored by the classroom teacher to prevent the student from having close contact (head to head) with other children for the remainder of the school day. The parent may be contacted by phone and choose to pick their child up from school for immediate treatment. The appropriate **Head Lice Information (AD-H-302)** form should be sent home with the student. Communication to the parent is very important to both educate then and assure compliance with treatment. Other school-age siblings who live in the home may need to be evaluated also. The student can be readmitted to school after treatment and upon examination if the school-designated personnel find no live lice on the child.

On occasion, if multiple students in the same classroom are found to have active cases of head lice, the **Notice to Parents – Head Lice (form AD-H-301)** may be sent to parents/guardians of all students in that classroom. These letters are done at the discretion of the school principal, with input from the school nurse. Recurrences of head lice in that classroom do not require that another letter be sent out, as the information is the same. The principal must be involved and supportive of nursing efforts to control head lice in the school population. **In accordance with FERPA/HIPAA school officials may not disclose to any other parent or guardian the name(s) or private health information of affected students.**

Parent Responsibilities

- Check child/children before school starts in the fall and before returning from school breaks.
- Check all family members once a month for lice during the school year will help control lice outbreaks.
- Contact the school if you know or suspect that your child has lice.
- Inform family and friends so they can check their children.
- Treat your child and follow instructions to control transmission in the home. This includes combing and picking for nits daily for two weeks or until nits have been removed.
- Examine all household members if a family member has been identified as infested with lice and treat appropriately.
- Soak brushes, combs, hair clips in lice shampoo or soak in hot water above 120 degrees for 10 minutes.
- Wash clothing, bedding and linens by machine washing and drying using the hot cycle for 20 minutes.
- Vacuum all rugs, carpets, furniture, car, car seats and strollers. Discard the vacuum bag. If using a bagless vacuum, securely bag vacuum contents immediately after vacuuming.
- Use of **environmental sprays is NOT recommended** due to toxicity and ineffectiveness.

Teacher Responsibilities

- Actively participate in head lice prevention in the classroom and instruct students in preventive practices as needed throughout the school year.
- Discourage close head contact in your classrooms. Separate coats, hats, scarves, gloves, backpacks, etc. by hanging on the back of individual chairs or placing articles in individual plastic (garbage) bags before placing on hooks and or in lockers. Put hats and gloves in pockets or sleeves of student's coat.
- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair ornaments, hats, caps, scarves or any other personal headgear or try on other people's hats.
- Shared headgear, (i.e., helmets), earphones, etc. should be cleaned and disinfected with a disinfectant or rubbing alcohol before being issued to other students.
- Recognize that lice are an infestation and communicable, any student may be affected.
- Be alert to signs of potential lice infestation in students (scratching the head), particularly at the nape of the neck.
- Notify school office so that appropriate cleaning of classroom items can occur, (i.e., upholstered furniture, carpets, etc.).
- Protect the identity of students with head lice.
- Encourage parents to check their children regularly for head lice.
- Play clothing, linens, smocks, tee shirts and cloth toys worn or handled by an infested individual within 2 days before diagnosis should be washed in water hotter than 130 degrees, or machine dried at the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes.
- Other articles may be sealed in a plastic bag for at least 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours below freezing temperatures.

Nurse Responsibilities

- Provide education and educational materials as needed to families.
- Provide training and support to school staff on lice detection and procedures to follow.
- Discuss treatment options and prevention of reinfestation with the family.
- Coordinate with office staff regarding tracking students with confirmed cases of lice.

School Principal/Office Staff

- Notify parent/guardian of infested child by phone and provide a copy of the **Head Lice Information Letter (form AD-H 302)**.
- Assign staff member(s) to be trained regarding lice identification.
- Be aware of parent's responsibility and if needed enlist the school nurses help in ensuring that parents understand lice treatment and protocol.
- Protect the confidentiality of students and their families.
- Notify custodial staff regarding the need for cleaning the school environment.

Tips for Cleaning the School Environment

- Vacuum all floors, rugs, pillows, carpet squares, and upholstered furniture.
- Spraying or fogging schools with insecticides or pediculicides is NOT RECOMMENDED, and may be harmful if used in a poorly ventilated area. **Do not use environmental sprays or chemical cleaners in classrooms, lockers, or on gym mats or other school equipment.** Head lice do not live off the body. The head louse must maintain a constant warm temperature. **Do not use chemical sprays on audio/video headsets, tables or mats, carpet, upholstered chairs, school bus benches, etc. Chemical and environmental sprays create breathing problems for children and may sensitize or aggravate breathing problems for asthmatics. Some chemicals in environmental sprays may be absorbed through the skin or mucous membranes.**