



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
PHILADELPHIA

**School Health Services**

**Pediculosis Capitis (Lice) Guidelines**

**Rationale:**

- **The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that healthy children should not be excluded from, or allowed to miss school because of head lice.**
- Lice do not cause serious health problems. They may itch, but do not cause pain. Secondary infections from scratching are possible, but rare.
- Lice usually live on a child's head for about a month before they are discovered.
- Methods to prevent lice transmission should be consistently practiced at all times.
- Although not painful or a serious health hazard, head lice are the cause of much embarrassment and misunderstanding, many unnecessary days lost from school and work, and millions of dollars spent on remedies.

**The following School District of Philadelphia protocol has been developed to limit the amount of time a child is absent from school secondary to lice. Once nits or lice have been recognized there is no need for the child to leave the classroom immediately. Follow these guidelines and notify the parent, as soon as possible. Ideally, if the parent is notified while the child is at school they may be able to obtain the medication prior to arriving to get their child. It is not mandatory that a parent or guardian pick up the child before dismissal.**

1) If a teacher suspects a child has lice:

- a) Call the health room to talk to the CSN. The CSN will allow the child to come to the health room when other students are not in the health room.

OR

- b) Children with lice should be sent to the health room for assessment at the end of the day.
- 2) Until the child is assessed, avoid activity that involves the child in head-to-head contact with other children or sharing of head gear.
  - 3) Children with nits and lice will return to the classroom until a parent or guardian arrives to take them home, which may not be until the end of the school day. An informational letter will be given to the parent or guardian when the child is picked up and to students whose parents or guardians cannot be reached to pick up the student.

- 4) Children with an active infestation (live lice and/or nits < ½ an inch away from the scalp) should be treated. Counsel parents that FDA approved medications are available over the counter.
- 5) Children with only nits, > ½ an inch from the scalp do not require treatment with medication. However, parents should be aware of the presence of the nits. Daily inspection and combing the hair to remove the eggs for up to 3 weeks, will gradually rid the hair of the nits.
- 6) If a child is found to have lice or nits, any siblings and other children occupying the same home, will also be checked. **Entire classrooms will no longer be checked for lice.**
- 7) Encourage and enforce with your students not to share personal items such as hats, coats, brushes, combs, hair accessories, etc. Do not allow students to touch each other's heads or play with each other's hair.
- 8) During a period where more than one student has head lice in your classroom, keep coats on the backs of the students' chairs. Hats and gloves should be kept in coat sleeves whenever possible.
- 9) To protect yourself, wear long hair up.

Rescreening a child for lice prior to their return to school is done at the discretion of the CSN.

If you have any questions, please contact your school's nurse.

**REMEMBER:**

- Live lice crawl, they do not fly or jump.
- Nits are the lice eggs attached to the hair shaft.
- Lice can infest anyone.
- When lice are off the head, adult lice usually cannot survive for more than 1-2 days. Nits off the hair will die within hours of hatching.
- A home / school / room cannot be chemically treated (exterminated) for lice.

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