

AHN HEAD LICE POLICY

While inconvenient, head lice cause no medical harm and can be effectively treated. Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun while being discouraged from close head contact with others. As a result, the CDC, AAP and the National Association of School Nurses advocate that “no-nit” policies should be discontinued for the following reasons:

- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families and communities far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
- Many nits are more than ¼ inch from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and very unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as casings.
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.
- Misdiagnosis of nits is very common during nit checks conducted by nonmedical personal.

The Academy of the Holy Names (AHN) has changed its lice management guidelines to reflect CDC guidelines. The following information explains the reason for the change and why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice.

Why did AHN make a change?

AHN lice management guidelines have been changed to reflect standard practice as recommended by the *Centers for Disease Control (CDC)*, *American Academy of Pediatrics*, the *National Association of School Nurses*, the *American School Health Association*, the *Harvard School of Public Health*, and many other policy making organizations. They all recommend that students with eggs and/or head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL. When lice are found on a child at school, that child’s parents will be informed. The school nurse will follow up to make sure the child is treated appropriately.

Why would these medical organizations recommend keeping a child with lice in school?

Lice do not cause disease and are not dangerous to a child. Medically, it didn't make sense that children with the common cold, which is easily passed from student to student, can stay in school, but children with lice, which can only rarely be given to another child in school and are in no way dangerous, were kept out of school. Children with head lice are not considered sick.

By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had them for three to four weeks.

This means the child has been attending school this entire time. AHN is encouraging parents to check their children for head lice regularly throughout the year.

School is NOT a high risk area for getting lice!

Multiple studies over the past ten years have repeatedly proven that school RARELY is the place of lice transmission. The major mode of transmission is through head-to-head contact at sleepovers, close playing environments, and through relatives. Activities such as hugging, play wrestling, and sharing a bed all offer opportunities for lice to spread. Head lice live only on people and do not

infest pets, homes, or schools. They are seen more often in very young children who play very closely together. Although this strikes fear into the hearts of many parents, it is important to keep head lice infestation in perspective. Here at AHN, we try very hard to deal with the cases we have each year in a matter-of-fact manner that does not make the child feel shamed or singled out.

What WILL the school do if a case of lice is found?

- The school nurse will check any student reported by staff to possibly have lice. Scratching or a tingling sensation on the scalp is sometimes an indication of infestation. If active lice or nits (eggs) are found, the parent will be notified. The school nurse will provide information to the parents about proper treatment. **Parents will NOT be informed of other children who have lice in school, as that is a privacy concern**, but they will receive a notice if a case of lice has been identified in the class.

Parents of children with head lice are encouraged to check all family members and talk to parents of their child's playmates. Only family members with live lice should be treated. Check your child's scalp weekly; head lice are easier to treat if caught early. Talk to your children about not sharing hair products, e.g. brushes, head bands, ornaments, etc.

Lice are very common. They always exist in children and in schools. No school is ever lice free, just like no school is free of head colds. Before considering any kind of treatment, be sure you find a live, crawling insect. If lice are found on one family member, then everyone in the home should be checked. Unless resistance has been seen in the community, pediatricians and parents should consider using over-the-counter medications containing 1 percent permethrin or pyrethrins as a first choice of treatment for active lice infestations. The best way to interrupt a chronic lice problem is with regular checks by parents and early treatment with a safe, affordable, over-the-counter pediculicide. After applying the product according to the manufacturer's instructions, parents should follow with nit removal and wet combing. The treatment should be reapplied at day 9, and if needed, at day 18. Package directions must be followed carefully.

Recently researchers have found a new breed of "super lice" in 25 states, including Florida. These "super lice" are not easily killed by the over-the-counter lice shampoos. They have become resistant to the OTC products. If lice are seen after the second treatment, parents should call their pediatrician to discuss other treatments available only by prescription. In areas with known resistance to an over-the-counter pediculicide, or when parents' efforts on their own do not work, parents should involve their pediatrician for treatment with a prescription medication such as spinosad or topical ivermectin.

Your school nurse is here to partner with you to develop a treatment plan and answer questions you might have about head lice and the care of your family.

PARENTS AND SCHOOLS AS PARTNERS IN THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF HEAD LICE



Each person in the school community has a responsibility in the prevention of head lice:

School - provide information. Education is the key to controlling head lice; therefore, the school will provide information on head lice and treatment through email or on the website.

School Nurse – assessment and education. The school nurse will do an assessment of a child with symptoms of head lice, such as scratching, nits and/or lice seen on hair. The school nurse will notify the parent if nits or lice are seen and provide education about treatment and prevention as needed.

Teacher – recognize the symptoms of head lice and discreetly send the student to the nurse for assessment. Maintain confidentiality. Discourage activities that cause direct head-to-head contact.

Parent – periodically check your child for head lice. Follow the labeled instructions on the lice treatment shampoo. Over use or improper use of lice treatment products can be toxic to your child but are the most effective method available at this time and safe if used as directed. Contact your school nurse if you need more information or would like your child checked for head lice.

Student – avoid activities that cause direct head-to-head contact. Do not share items that come in contact with your head such as hats, combs, brushes, hair ribbons, etc.... See the school nurse if your head has been itchy. Remind your parents to check your head periodically for signs of head lice.

HEADLICE Q&A

What are head lice?



Lice, or pediculosis, are small tan to grayish-white insects about the size of a sesame seed that have been around since the beginning of human kind. They have six legs that allow them to attach to the shaft of the hair. They cannot jump, hop or fly. Lice live for about 30 days on a person's head and lay about 6 eggs per day, adding up to over 100 in a life cycle. At one time, there are usually no more than about a dozen live lice on the head but you may see many eggs.

Head lice need the warmth and food from the scalp to survive and if the louse falls off the head it can't survive more than a day or so. If a louse falls off the head, it usually means that it is sick or dying and can no longer reproduce.

Can head lice cause harm?

Lice do not carry disease. They are a nuisance, causing discomfort, stress and sometimes skin irritation.

The greatest harm comes from misguided attempts at ridding the child of lice with the misuse of caustic or toxic chemicals. Grooming is an effective method of ridding your child of head lice.

How do I know if my child has head lice and how did they get it?



Intense itching may be the first sign of head lice. Lice feed off blood on the scalp. As they feed, they cause skin irritation similar to mosquito bites. Check your child's head thoroughly, especially behind the ears, at the neckline on the back of the head and the very top of the head.

You may first see nits, which are white to yellow in color and appear similar to dandruff or hair spray droplets. You can tell the difference between dandruff and nits by flicking the object. If the object moves freely it is dandruff. If it must be scraped off with your fingernails, it is most likely a nit.

Your child acquired head lice from another infested person. They move from person to person through direct head to head contact. Lice cannot jump, hop or fly but can crawl from person to person anytime their heads are close, like while playing sports or during sleepovers. Lice can be spread while sharing hats, combs and other hair items but is rare since they prefer the warmth of the scalp and tend not to attach to anything other than hair. Children get lice more than teens or adults, but ANY child can get head lice. It doesn't matter where they live or go to school, whether they are a boy or girl, or how much money they have. Taking a bath won't kill head lice or keep your child from getting it.

Since your child most likely has had the infestation for more than 30 days by the time it is detected, time is better spent on treatment and education rather than trying to figure out from whom they got the lice. Preventing spread through the family is the best way to prevent further sharing of head lice.

What should I do if I think my child has head lice?

Treatment should only be considered when there are live lice or viable eggs seen. An egg seen about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch or less from the scalp is most likely not dead. This means that live lice could still be living somewhere on your child's head.

Treatment should include FDA approved lice treatment shampoos and mechanical removal. Lice treatment shampoos can be purchased without a prescription from a grocery store or pharmacy. Used correctly, these products are safe; however, follow the directions carefully since these shampoos do contain toxic substances that can be harmful if misused. Resistant “super lice” will probably require a prescription lice treatment, and the physician should be consulted.

Mechanical removal is done using the fine-toothed comb provided in most lice treatment shampoo boxes. These are used to go through all of the hair to scrape off the eggs and remove any lice that remain after shampoo treatment. Removal of the eggs is important so there is no confusion about a re-infestation. Also, lice treatment shampoos are not always 100% effective at killing all viable eggs. For this reason, it is usually recommended to retreat the hair with lice killing shampoo 9 days after the initial treatment. Continue working all the nits out of the hair in between both treatments until all nits are gone.

Consult with the school nurse if you have any questions, concerns or you would like her to check your child for signs of head lice infestation.

How do I keep head lice from coming back?

- ✓ Follow the directions on the lice treatment package. Not following the directions is the biggest reason why it doesn't work.
- ✓ Most of the time a second treatment is necessary. **If you don't kill all the nits, they will hatch and your child will have lice again - this time without contact from another infested child.**
- ✓ Launder clothing, bedding and towels immediately before lice treatment so live lice don't crawl onto your lice-free, just treated heads. Make sure you launder the clothes in hot water. Don't forget to wash coats and hats! Dry cleaning or placing items in sealed plastic bags works for those items that can't be washed in water. Wash brushes, combs, hats and other hair items in hot water daily through the lice treatment process.
- ✓ Teach your whole family about how lice is spread and treated. Teach your children not to share combs, brushes, hats, towels or other personal items that should be separate for each child. Disinfect combs and brushes used by

an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.

- ✓ Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- ✓ Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, spending a great amount of time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid reinfestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing. Head lice are spread most commonly by direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. Much less frequently they are spread by sharing clothing or belongings onto which lice have crawled or nits attached to shed hairs may have fallen. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is **very small**. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the scalp.
- ✓ Check your child’s head from time to time for signs of lice. Catching it early can cut down on the number of treatments, and save time and money.

Myths, misconceptions and truths about head lice treatment

Using poisons or flammable liquids like gasoline, kerosene, and paint thinner or insect repellent may harm your child more than the lice. Only use FDA approved products specific for the treatment of lice.

Do not use hair dryers to kill lice or their eggs. The temperature would have to be turned up so high that it could easily burn your child’s scalp.

Hair gels, hairspray, oils or other non-medicated products do not kill lice or their eggs.

Cutting your child’s hair or shaving their head to get rid of lice won’t keep them away. Lice stick to short and just “grown in” hair too.

Medications that are FDA approved for head lice treatments, whether prescription or over-the-counter are safe and effective for children over two years of age. For children younger than two, check with your physician.

Head lice resources

Head lice information from expert epidemiologists at the Harvard School of Public Health Epidemiology. Also includes information about bed bugs and ticks:

<http://identify.us.com/>

Centers for Disease Control: specific topics, special interest groups (parents, school) and additional resources

- www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/