

STUDENTS

Requirements and Procedures for the Control of Head Lice

Prince William County Public Schools (PWCS)/School Age Child Care (SACC) Guidelines for Handling Head Lice in Classrooms

PWCS/SACC follows the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), and Harvard School of Public Health. Students found 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. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice. Nits are the eggs of head lice and may be found on the hair, scalp, or fibers of clothing.

Current evidence does not support the efficacy and cost effectiveness of classroom or school-wide screening for decreasing the incidence of head lice among school children.

Children are not required to be free of nits before they return to school.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to comb out as many nits as possible in order to avoid confusion as to whether or not the child has an active case of head lice. Removal of nits requires daily combing of the hair for 7-10 days with a fine tooth nit comb.

A child who returns to school after treatment will be checked privately in the health office.

After consultation with Student Health Services, letters may be sent home to the parents of classmates when there are more than 10 percent of the students in the same classroom identified with head lice.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for implementing and monitoring this regulation.

The Associate Superintendent for Student Learning and Accountability (or designee) is responsible for reviewing this regulation in 2019.

References:

“American Academy of Pediatrics” – Vol. 110, No. 3 September 2002, pp. 638-643

“Harvard School of Public Health,” August 2000

“Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal,” August 2000

National Association of School Nurses, 2010

HIPAA

Center for Disease Control, September 2013

Facts about Head Lice

Head lice are the cause of much embarrassment and misunderstanding, many unnecessary days lost from school/SACC and work, and millions of dollars spent on remedies. Because no disease process is associated with head lice, schools/SACC are not advised to exclude students when nits remain after appropriate lice treatment, although further monitoring for signs of re-infestation is appropriate.

- a. Head lice feed on human blood several times a day and live close to human scalp.
- b. They do not spread disease and, therefore, are not considered a health hazard.
- c. Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly.
- d. Transmission in most cases is direct head-to-head contact.
- e. It is not common to spread head lice by contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (combs, brushes, or towels).
- f. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school/SACC has nothing to do with transmission of head lice.
- g. Lice are not capable of moving to another host within the first few days of hatching and they do not reproduce within their first ten days.
- h. Nits may persist after successful treatment.
- i. The gold standard for diagnosing head lice is finding a live louse, not nits, since studies show only 18 percent of nits go on to hatch.

Facts about Head Lice

I. Life Cycle of a Head Louse

The life cycle of a head louse has three stages:

- A. Eggs;
- B. Nymph; and
- C. Adult

II. Eggs/Nits

- A. Nits are head lice eggs. They are hard to see and are often confused with dandruff or hair spray droplets.
- B. Nits are about 1mm long, shaped like a tear drop, and may be pigmented to match the host hair color.
- C. Nits laid closer to the scalp are more viable since body temperature is important to hatching.
- D. Nits take about one week to hatch (range six to nine days). Viable eggs are usually located within 6mm (1/4 inch) of the scalp.

III. Nymphs

- A. The egg hatches to release a nymph.
- B. The nit shell then becomes a more visible dull yellow and remains attached to the hair shaft.
- C. The nymph is about the size of a pinhead. After feeding, it can appear red (the color of blood).
- D. Nymphs mature after three months and become adults about seven days after hatching.

IV. Adults

- A. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has six legs (each with claws), and is tan to grayish-white. In persons with dark hair, the adult louse will appear darker.
- B. Females are usually larger than males and can lay up to 6-10 nits per day.
- C. The life span of the louse is up to 30 days on a person's head. To live, adult lice need to feed on blood several times daily. Without blood meals, the louse will die within one to two days off the host.

Head Lice Prevention and Treatment

I. Prevention

- A. Avoid head to head contact.
- B. Do not share combs, hats, hair barrettes, scarves, and coats.
- C. Parent/guardian should check pre-school and elementary children's hair routinely for signs of nits and live lice.
- D. If your child has head lice, inform the parents/guardians of all the children that they have come in close contact (slept with, had head to head contact, shared hats, scarfs, comb/brush) with for the past three to four weeks.

II. Treatment

- A. Check all family members on the same day and only those with signs of live head lice should be treated.
- B. There are several over-the-counter and prescription treatments.
- C. For more information on the different treatments, go to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.
- D. It is important to follow the directions on the box for the treatment to be effective.
- E. Do not use combination shampoo/conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for one to two days after the lice medicine is removed.
- F. Remove as many nits as possible in order to avoid confusion as to whether or not the child still has an active case of head lice. Removal of the nits requires daily combing of the hair for 7-10 days with a fine-toothed nit comb.

III. Environmental Measures

- A. Machine wash and dry all personal items (bedding, clothing, towels, etc.) used within two days before treatment.
- B. Wash items in HOT water in the washing machine and/or place in HOT dryer for 20 minutes.
- C. Seal non-washable items like stuffed animals in plastic bags for 10 days.
- D. Vacuum floors/carpet and furniture. However, spending a lot of time and money on house cleaning activities is not necessary.
- E. Spraying with an insecticide is not recommended because it can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

(Date)

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your child, _____, is being sent home today, _____,
with head lice.

In order for your child to return to school, it is important that you follow the recommended instructions. Upon completion of treatment, a parent/guardian must accompany the child to school for recheck by the school nurse or designee prior to the child's return to the classroom or School Age Child Care (SACC).

CDC recommended instructions and treatments are listed in Attachment II. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/lice/head/schools.html.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call the school at _____.

School Nurse