

## HEAD LICE PROTOCOL

Head lice are a common occurrence in the school setting, and may start either in the community, home, or in the school. Transmission occurs through direct contact with the head of another affected individual. Indirect spreading may occur through combs, brushes, hats, coats and scarves. **Classroom and school wide routine screenings have not been effective in preventing or reducing head lice infestations.** However, the school nurse will check for lice on symptomatic children who are itching or complaining of pruritus. Parents must inform the school nurse if their child has lice so other students who spend time in close proximity can be checked. Head lice do not carry disease and therefore otherwise healthy children should not be excluded from school unless active adult lice are found. (*American Academy of Pediatrics, School Health Policy and Practices.*)

### Screening procedures:

Once a case is reported to the school further screenings are indicated and will be done as follows:

- A. Any siblings will be screened.
- B. Students that spend time in close proximity of a student found to have live lice will be checked.
- C. A letter will be sent home by the school nurse stating the potential for more cases of head lice and reminding parents to check their children.

### If a student is found to have live lice during the school day:

1.) The school nurse will notify a parent/guardian and discuss proper treatment as well as protocol for returning to school. Treatment includes:

- Have the child apply a lice medication like NIX, T-Gel, or Lice Repel according to the instructions. Also consider treating all family members within the household. Only re-treat the child according to package directions.
- Remove as many nits/eggs from the hair as possible using a lice comb to reduce re-infestation and decrease diagnostic confusion.
- Wash all bedding and any clothing/hats worn in the last week in hot water, dry thoroughly in the dryer. Put anything that cannot be washed in sealed plastic bags for 2 weeks.
- Soak combs/brushes in very hot water for 5-10 minutes.
- Anyone with long hair should keep their hair back in a tight ponytail. Hair cuts are not necessary.
- Check all members of the household daily for 3 weeks to be sure there is not a re-infestation.

- 2.) The child is allowed to return after treatment as long as no live lice are present. The school nurse will check the child before re-entering the classroom and will be allowed to return even if nits are found. Parent will be contacted about findings and reminded to follow proper treatment procedures and remove nits daily.
- 3.) The school nurse will use their medical judgement to decide when to re-check students. In most instances, minimal re-checks will be done unless the nurse is concerned about re-infestation or inappropriate home treatment.
- 4.) School staff will ensure student has appropriate time to make up any work that was missed during excused absence due to treatment.
- 5.) For the rare student that has continuing re-infestations, the school may refer the case to public health personnel for a home visit to ensure that treatment is conducted effectively.
- 6.) The school and the school district will remain calm and educate the community on the fears and myths of head lice. A student with head lice will be confidentially managed on individual case basis with the goal being for the student's attendance to be unaffected due to a diagnosis of head lice.

