



THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Office of School Health

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September, 2007

To : All Principals

From : Oxiris Barbot, M.D.
Medical Director
Office of School Health

Subject: Management of Head Lice (Pediculosis) in School

The policy on lice and nits for all NYC public schools has changed. Effective immediately, students will no longer be excluded if they have nits (lice eggs). Students with head lice will continue to be excluded until they are lice-free. Excluded students will be examined for lice when they return to school and rechecked 14 days later to confirm that they remain free of lice.

Background

Head lice are most commonly found in children 3-12 years of age. Head lice do not pose a health hazard, transmit disease, nor serve as a sign of poor hygiene, child abuse or neglect. Nits are not equivalent to head lice, since nits cannot be transmitted from person to person, and therefore should not result in school exclusion. Head lice, on the other hand, are transmitted as a result of direct head-to-head contact. Transmission of head lice in the classroom is uncommon and lice are rarely present in more than 5% of students.

This policy is endorsed by national organizations such as American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and the National Association of School Nurses. Similar policies have been adopted successfully by school systems throughout the country.

Details on New Policy for New York City Public Schools

(This does not apply to stand alone pre-schools; daycare centers and sleep away camps)

- Students with head lice will be excluded when lice are identified. Parents will be notified, instructed in treatment of head lice and asked to pick up their child as soon as possible.
- Students will be re-examined by the principal's designee upon returning to school. Students with head lice will not be allowed to re-enter until they are lice free.
- Students that have been cleared of lice will be re-examined in 14 calendar days (or closest school day if 14th day falls on weekend or holiday) by the principal's designee.

- Students found to have head lice on re-examination will once again be excluded until they are lice free.
- No school-wide surveillance will be conducted for nits.
- Student with nits and no evidence of live head lice will not be excluded from school.

Principal Guidance on Implementation of New Policy

- Designate staff members (we recommend out of classroom personnel) to conduct lice inspections (not nit checks) for suspected cases. Sufficient staff should be trained so that at least one person is always available (this should not be the school nurse).
- Ensure that the school nurse has trained this team to identify head lice and conduct a head lice inspection.
- Ensure that a staff member maintains a list of head lice exclusions so that these children can be re-checked before being re-admitted and again in 14 calendar days.
- Ensure that notification letters are sent to parents of affected children.
- Students who have live head lice despite two treatment cycles should be referred to the school nurse.
- Collaborate with your school nurse to provide educational information to parents and children about head lice.
- If parents are concerned about the presence of head lice, consider asking your school nurse to speak to parents individually or in a group setting. A separate session for staff may also be helpful.
- Explain to concerned parents that routine head inspections have not been demonstrated to be effective in reducing the number of students with live lice.

Available Resources

The school nurse is your best resource to educate parents and teachers about head lice. In addition, you may also consult your Office of School Health nursing supervisor or Integrated Service Center (ISC) health director. The Office of School Health’s “Facts About Head Lice” and “Guidance for Families on Getting Rid of Head Lice” are also valuable health education tools found at the link below.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/DYD/Health/Pediculosis/default.htm>

Please contact ISC Health Director or Regional Nursing Director should you need further assistance.

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