

**School District of South Orange & Maplewood
525 Academy Street
Maplewood, New Jersey 07040**

PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE) PROCEDURE

Head Lice (pediculosis capitus) are small parasitic insects that live on the scalp and neck hairs of their human hosts. Physically, they have remained unchanged for 2000 years. **Lice are not a serious health threat because they do not cause illness.** Complications related to infestation are rare; pruritis (itching) is the most common problem. It is critical in the prevention and control of pediculosis that the school and parent community work together.

In making recommendations for treatment, the school nurse is the most knowledgeable professional in the school community regarding pediculosis management. The parent/guardian will be educated as to the appropriate health information for treatment and prevention of pediculosis. A parent education program is in place at each elementary school in the South Orange-Maplewood School District as a means by which to prevent the spread of pediculosis. Classroom teachers will also be given information at the beginning of each school year.

Identification of Pediculosis

A child shall be determined to have head lice if the school nurse who examines him/her sees an active case of head lice. The parent/guardian will be notified to pick up the student from school and be given a fact sheet on head lice. The parent/guardian will also be asked to contact their pediatrician for prescribed treatment. When an active case of head lice is discovered at the elementary schools, the entire class will be screened by the school nurse. The school district nursing staff will communicate with each other in regard to siblings of the infected child. Middle and high school students will be screened on a case by case basis.

Identification of Nits

Nits are the eggs of the parasitic insects known as lice. In a study performed by the American Academy of Pediatrics (2000), it was found that children who had more than 5 nits within 1 cm or ¼ inch of the scalp were more likely to develop an infestation. Therefore, the school nurse will not send home a child that has a mild case of nit infestation as determined by the school nurse. The presence of nits does not indicate active infestation.

The school district of South Orange-Maplewood agrees with the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as the National Association of School Nurses in their belief that a nit-free policy disrupts the education process and should not be an essential strategy in the management of pediculosis.

Parental Notification

When a child is discovered with a case of active head lice, letters will be sent to parents for that classroom only, informing them of the infestation along with recommendations. Siblings will also be screened and parents encouraged to communicate with the parents/guardians of other children who have come in contact with their child. This includes friends, play dates and after school programs.

Returning to School

After treatment is administered and confirmed by the school nurse, the student must report to the school nurse's office accompanied by their parent/guardian. The child's hair will be re-checked prior to the return to the classroom. The student must be completely free of visible lice to be re-admitted into school.

Pediculosis (Head Lice) FACT SHEET

- Head lice are parasitic insects that live in the hair and scalp of humans. They need human blood to survive.
- Head lice are spread easily from head to head by direct contact.
- Head lice can infest anyone, regardless of personal hygiene.
- Head lice are usually treatable with lice-killing shampoos and creme rinses.
- To prevent infection:
 - avoid direct contact with the head, hair, clothing, or personal belongings of a person with head lice, and
 - treat affected persons, their contacts, and their households.

How are head lice spread?

Head lice are spread easily from person to person by direct contact. People can get head lice by:

- Coming into close contact with an already infested person. In children, contact is common during play, while riding the school bus, and during classroom activities in which children sit in groups close to each other.
- Wearing infested clothing, such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, or hair ribbons.
- Using infested combs, brushes, or towels.
- Lying on a bed, couch, pillow, carpet, or stuffed animal that has been contaminated.
- Lice do not jump or fly. Lice are not spread to humans from pets or other animals.
- **Lice cannot survive longer than 24 hours when not in contact with the human head.**

What are the signs and symptoms of head lice?

- Itching -- the body's allergic reaction to the bite.

How is head lice infestation diagnosed?

- Head lice infestation is diagnosed by looking closely through the hair and scalp for nits, nymphs, or adult lice.
- Nits are the easiest to see. They are found "glued" to the hair shaft. Unlike dandruff or hairspray, they will not slide along a strand of hair. If you find nits more than 1/4 inch from the scalp, the infection is probably an old one.
- Nymphs and adults can be hard to find; there are usually few of them, and they can move quickly from searching fingers. If lice are seen, finding nits close to the scalp confirms that a person is infested. If you are not sure if a person has head lice, the diagnosis should be made by a health-care provider or school nurse.

What is the treatment for head lice infestation?

- Consult with your pediatrician regarding treatment.
- Treat based on the shampoo manufacturer's directions.
- Check hair and remove nits for a period of two weeks after treatment using a lice comb.
- Continue to check family members weekly to prevent a reoccurrence.

How do I treat the household?

- To kill lice and nits, machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens that the infested person touched during the 2 days before they were diagnosed. Wash clothes and linens in the HOT water cycle. Dry items on the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- Dry clean clothing that is not washable (coats, hats, scarves, etc.). OR
- Seal all non-washable items (clothing, stuffed animals, comforters, etc.) in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Soak combs and brushes for 1 hour in hot water.
- Vacuum beds, upholstered furniture, rugs and car seats. When finished, discard the vacuum bag.

How common is head lice infection?

Head lice is a very common condition, especially among children ages 3-10. As many as 6 million to 12 million people worldwide get head lice each year. Outbreaks of head lice occur often in schools and group settings worldwide.

How can head lice be prevented?

- Outbreaks of head lice have nothing to do with a family's income, social status, or level of personal hygiene.
- Avoid direct contact with a person who has lice, or with their clothing or personal belongings.
- Watch for signs of lice, such as frequent head scratching. Nits do not cause symptoms, but they can be seen on the hair shaft; they are yellow-white and oval-shaped.
- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, scarves, hair ribbons, helmets, headphones, hats, towels, bedding, clothing, or other personal items.
- Examine household members and close contacts of a person with head lice, and treat only if infested.