

Head Lice

New Guidelines and Information

Dew ISD has recently changed its head lice management guidelines. This is to explain the reasons for the change in guidelines and to help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice. The Texas Department of Health Services has removed head lice from its list of communicable diseases.

Why did the district make a change?

Dew ISD's lice guidelines have been changed to reflect standard practice as recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, the Harvard School of Public Health, and many others. They all recommend that students with eggs (nits) and/or live head lice **REMAIN IN SCHOOL**, and not be excluded. When lice is found on a child, that child's parent will, of course, be informed. An information sheet also will be sent home.

Why would the Medical Organizations recommend this?

1. Although lice are "icky", they do not cause disease and are not dangerous to the child or others. It didn't make sense that students with lice, who are not sick, and in no way dangerous, were kept out of school.
2. Lice are not easily spread. Lice are spread from head-to-head contact. They move by crawling and cannot hop or fly. The spread by contact with inanimate objects (such as hats, headphones, and coats) or other personal items (such as brushes, combs, or towels) used by an infested person is possible but rare.
3. Head lice do not survive off their human host more than 24-36 hours. In the rare instance one falls off its host, it will become very weak and not live long.
4. Most importantly, school is NOT a high risk area for getting lice. Over the past ten years multiple studies have proven the school RARELY is the place for transmission. Head lice infest people, not school buildings or buses. It is more common to get lice from family members, overnight guests, and playmates who spend a lot of time together. Lice cause an emotional reaction. Old fashioned 'no-nit' policies were based on that reaction, not on scientific evidence of how lice were passed. In the past 10 years MULTIPLE studies have proven keeping kids home with eggs or live lice does NOT reduce the amount of lice. These outdated policies are bad for the health, well-being, emotional, and educational status of students.

What will the school do if a case of lice is suspected or found?

The school nurse will check any student that has symptoms of head lice. If live lice are found the nurse will notify the parent and help educate the parent and child about head lice, how to prevent them, and what to do now that they are present. An information sheet will also be sent home. The student will then return to class. If the student has repeated

episodes, the nurse will refer them to their health care provider. Parents of children with head lice will be encouraged to talk to other parents of close classmates. Students with lice will be checked one week later to make sure all lice are gone.

Lice are very common. They always exist in children and in children in school. No school is ever lice free, just like no school is free of head colds.

What can families can do?

1. Watch for signs and symptoms of head lice such as excessive itching or scratching of the head, especially behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
2. Check family members for head lice and nits at least weekly. It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass.
3. Treat only the family members who have lice. Over the counter medications (pediculocides) that kill lice and nits are recommended. Most of these chemicals require 2 separate treatments, 7-10 days apart.
4. Use the specialized shampoos exactly as instructed to be the most effective. Use the product over the sink. Use a washcloth to protect eyes.
5. Removing all nits (eggs) with a special fine-toothed comb is the most effective way to get rid of all of them. This may be a tedious job.
6. Wash infested articles that can be laundered at 130 degrees F and dried on the *hot* setting.
7. Articles that cannot be laundered can be kept away from people for 24-48 hours if there is a concern of infestation. (a plastic bag can be used)
8. Head lice can only live 1-2 days away from the scalp so chemical treatment of the environment is *not* necessary. Vacuum floors, carpets, mattresses, and furniture.
9. Continue to check the head daily for 2-3 weeks after treatment. Often children will 're-infect' themselves because nits that were not killed during the treatment eventually hatch. Removing nits daily for several weeks is the most effective treatment.
10. Help prevent lice infestation by encouraging your child not to engage in activity that causes head to head contact.

Frequently Asked Questions (CDC website)

https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html

21 Surprising Things You Might Not Know About Head Lice

<http://www.easton.k12.ma.us/21%20Surprising%20Things%20You%20Might%20Not%20Know%20About%20Head%20Lice.pdf>

American Academy of Pediatrics article <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/AAP-Updates-Treatments-for-Head-Lice.aspx>

National Association of School Nurses "*Lice Lessons*"
<https://www.nasn.org/programs/educational-initiatives/lice-lessons>

Texas DSHS website (updated July 2017): <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/lice.shtm>