

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF BAYFIELD PEDICULOSIS CAPITIS (HEAD LICE)

Head Lice General Information

Agent/Transmission:

- *Pediculus humanus capitis* is the scientific name of head lice.
- They are specific to humans; pets are not involved.
- Lice do not jump or fly—they crawl.
- Lice are transmitted by direct contact with an infested head. Rarely, indirect transmission (bedding, hair accessories, hats, etc.) can occur, although only 4% of pillowcases used by infested persons actually had live lice on them.
- Lice are the size of sesame seeds, or smaller, and tan to greyish-white in color; eggs can be camouflaged to match hair color. They crawl very quickly and avoid light which can make them difficult to spot.
- Nits more than 1 centimeter from the scalp, generally will not survive.
- Lice are found on scalps from all socio-economic groups; they are not indicative of poverty, neglect, or lack of cleanliness.
- Lice cannot live without the proper temperature and food; therefore, they rarely live past 24-48 hours off the scalp.

Head Lice Protocol

Screening protocol recommendations:

- General screenings in asymptomatic children should be discouraged due to lack of evidence of efficacy.
- If a child shows symptoms consistent with head lice (complaints of itching scalp, scratching, or visible lice or nits), that child should be examined by the school nurse or other trained professionals.

Treatment protocol recommendations:

- Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school. When diagnosed, head lice have typically been present for at least one month, therefore the child can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to school the following day.

- Similarly, untreated children do not necessarily need to be excluded from school. Head lice have low contagion within classrooms. If a diagnosed child returns to school untreated, the school nurse shall contact the family to ascertain obstacles to, and facilitate treatment of the infestation.
- Students diagnosed with head lice should be discouraged from close, direct, head contact with others. They do not require removal from the classroom.
- The student's parent should be notified by the school nurse on the day of diagnosis either by telephone or by a sealed note sent home with the child at the end of the day. The information to the parent should include a statement that prompt, proper treatment of the head lice is in the best interest of their child, family and his or her classmates.
- There are many acceptable treatment options, including over-the-counter pediculocides, and manual removal of lice. The parents may be directed to their primary physician to help determine the best treatment option for the family.
- Retreatment should take place ideally nine (9) days after initial treatment.
- Students who only have nits may attend school and be observed for signs of re-infestation.
- Notification letters will be sent to families at the discretion of the school nurse, medical director, and administration.
- The school nurse shall re-examine the child, post-treatment, for live lice at the request of the parents or upon the discretion of the nurse.
- Only items that have been in contact with the head of the person with infestation in the 48 hours before treatment need be considered for cleaning. Louse survival off the scalp after 48 hours is extremely unlikely.
- Temperatures greater than 130 degrees F. will kill lice and nits, so exposed items that are washable or dryable can be cleaned in these ways.
- Items which cannot be washed can be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks (the time required for nits to hatch and for the nymphs to die of starvation).
- After treatment, parents should be encouraged to check regularly for head lice.

References:

Devore, Cynthia D., & Schutze, Gordon E., and the Council on School Health and Committee on Infectious Diseases. (2015) *Head Lice*. *Pediatrics*, 135(5), 1355-1365.

LEGAL REFERENCE: HFS 145.07 Wisconsin Administrative Code

CROSS REFERENCE: Policy/Communicable Diseases

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