# Managing Head Lice in School – Head Lice Policy

Head lice are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed. They move from one person to another by head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. They cannot jump to another person’s head. Head lice lay eggs which hatch after 7-10 days. It takes about 10 days for a recently hatched louse to grow into an adult and start to lay eggs.

Nits are the empty white egg shells which are left when the lice hatch. Nits look like dandruff but stick strongly to hair. Unlike dandruff, you cannot easily brush out nits.

# Parents' Responsibilities

**Mass screening of all pupils in a classroom and/or school does not control the spread of head lice.** Rather, the spread of head lice can be minimized with routine inspection for live head lice and nits by all parents and full treatment of those pupils with live head lice.

Parents and guardians are responsible for:

* Knowing [head lice signs and symptoms.](http://www.peelregion.ca/health/shp/2008/shrg-topics/head_lice/about/what_is.htm#symptoms)
* Routinely checking their child’s head for head lice once a week.
* Telling their child’s school, close friends, etc., that their child has head lice.
* Ensuring that full, proper treatment has been completed before the pupil returns to school.

**Advice to Parents**

# How to Find Head Lice (See Appendix 1)

* Severe itching is the most common sign of head lice.
* Look for head lice and tiny white or grey coloured eggs called nits. Nits look like tiny water drops and are stuck on the hair. They are hard to remove. While nits might signal a live infestation, they don’t necessarily mean that live head lice are present; the eggs may have already hatched.
* Check your own head and the heads of everyone who lives in the home.
* Advise school that your child has head lice, also tell the parents of your child’s friends to check their child for head lice.

# How to treat Head Lice (See Appendix 2)

* Information about special medicated treatments is available from the pharmacist or doctor.
* Only use medicated treatments on your child’s head if you find live, moving head lice. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions carefully.
* Do not use medicated treatments if you just find eggs or nits.
* After treating your child’s hair, make sure there are no live head lice. If you still find head lice that are moving, go back to the pharmacist or doctor for help.
* You can choose to remove nits from the hair by pulling them offwith your fingernails or a special lice comb, but this is not necessary.

*After the first treatment parents should:*

* Check the child’s head to make sure the treatment was successful. It was successful if no live lice are found.
* Speak to a pharmacist about another chemical treatment if you still find live lice.
* Continue to check the child’s head every day for 10 days. This is important as eggs that you are unlikely to have seen will continue to hatch.
* Do a second treatment 7 to 10 days after the first successful treatment. Chemical treatments do not completely kill eggs. The second treatment will kill lice that hatch after the first treatment.

*After the second treatment parents should:*

* Visually inspect the child’s head to make sure the treatment was successful.
* Parents can remove any nits if they choose.
* Inspect the child’s head every two days for 10 consecutive days.
* After 10 days of inspecting without detecting more live head lice, return to checking the child’s head once a week for nits and lice.

# How to Prevent Head Lice

Knowledge is one of the most important steps to both prevention and treatment. Parents and school staff both play key roles in preventing head lice. It is important that parents regularly check their child’s head (see ‘Advice to Parents’ above) and encourage their child to follow the advice below -

* Do not share personal items, such as combs, hats and scarves.
* Keep hats and scarves in a coat sleeve or pocket instead of in a spot with other hats and scarves.
* Tie long hair back.
* Check your child’s head every week for head lice. *School will –*
* Publish this policy on the school website and regularly remind parents to check their child’s head.
* Promptly notify parents of active head lice infestations in their child’s year group, referring parents to this policy on the website with particular attention to the ‘Head Lice Detection Map’ Appendix 1.

# Head Lice and Absence from School

Having head lice is not a reason for school absence as treatment can be administered quickly. However, should live head lice be noticed by a member of staff, a call will be made to the parent who will be asked to collect the child from school immediately. A thorough comb through or chemical treatment done quickly at home will enable the child to be back at school on the same day (unless of course parents are notified late in the afternoon). If the infestation continues for more than three weeks, the Headteacher will call the parents to discuss what is being done to eradicate the head lice and if necessary will make a referral to the school nurse.

# Appendix 1 Head Lice Detection Map

If your child has been in contact with a confirmed case of head

lice, check your child’s head for lice/nits every 2 days for 10 days.

# Fast Facts about Head Lice

* Head lice have been a common problem for thousands of years.
* Head lice do not cause illness or disease.
* Head lice have 6 strong claws that hold tightly to a hair shaft.
* Head lice can only survive on human heads, not pets or other animals. Head lice or nits are not likely to survive off the head for more than 3 days.
* Head lice do not fly or jump, they crawl from one person to another by close head-

to-head contact.

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Anyone can get head lice.

Check your child’s head once a

week for live lice or nits using one of

the following detection methods,

**Visual**

1

. Have your child sit in a

chair under a bright source

of light.

2

. Look very closely through

your child’s hair, especially

in the areas behind the

ears, nape of the neck and

crown of the head.

**Comb Out**

1

. Have your child sit in a chair

under a bright source of

light. (Sunshine works best).

. Part your child’s hair into

2

sections and comb through

each section.

. Inspect each section for nits

3

and live lice.

**Conditioner Comb Through**

1

. Apply white conditioner to dry hair,

covering root to tip.

2

. Comb conditioner through hair with an

ordinary comb and divide into sections.

. Use a lice comb to comb through every

3

section of hair.

. Wipe the lice comb onto a white paper

4

towel each time and look for lice and nits.

**No**

nits or live lice

found.

**Nits found**

in your

child’s hair.

**Live lice**

found in

your child’s hair.

**Check your child’s head**

**once a week.**

**Check your child’s head every**

**2**

**days for 10 days for live**

**lice.**

Removing nits is at your

discretion. If after 10 days you

do not find live lice in the hair,

continue to check your child’s

head once a week, every week.

**TREAT right away.**

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Refer to ‘Effective

Treatment of Head

Lice’

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Notify school and

child’s friends.

**REMEMBER:**

* If live head lice are found start using the ‘Effective Treatment of Head Lice’ resource sheet.

• Check every family member’s head if you find live head lice. Treat only if live head lice are found.

* Inform school and the class teacher.

# Appendix 2 Effective Treatment of Head Lice

Check your child’s head for live lice and nits (Use Head Lice Detection Map)

Live, moving lice found in your child’s

hair.

**Treatment is required.**

Nits found in your child’s hair.

NO nits or live lice found.

Ask pharmacist about the best

recommended treatment for head

lice.

**Do not treat.**

Check your child’s

head every 2 days for 10 days. If

live lice are found within those 10

days, treat. If no live lice are found

within those 10 days, go back to

checking once a week for nits

and/or lice. Removing nits is

optional.

**Do not treat.**

Check your

child’s head once a week.

Apply the first treatment on

your child’s hair. Follow the

instructions carefully.

**NOTE:**

If your child has been in

close contact with someone

with a confirmed case of head

lice, check your child’s hair for

lice and nits every 2 days for 10

Rinse the treatment from your child’s

hair as directed (using the sink not

the shower or bath in order to

minimise contact with skin). Check

for dead lice.

If you find dead lice, the

treatment is effective.

Continue to follow treatment

instructions.

If you still find live, moving lice in

your child’s hair, the treatment is

ineffective. Do not continue to use

this treatment. Consult with a

pharmacist for a different

treatment. Read instructions

carefully before applying a second

treatment.

Apply the second treatment to your child’s

hair anywhere between Day 7 to Day 10.

Removing nits is optional as nits do not

spread from head to head.

Check your child’s hair every 2 days for the

next ten days, using the Head Lice

Detection Map. If no live lice or nits are

found over those ten days, return to

checking your child’s hair once a week,

every week, using the Head Lice Detection

Map.