

Management of Head Lice in School

Description

Head lice are a common problem that usually affects school-aged children and their families. Head lice are tiny bugs (about the size of a sesame seed) that feed on small amounts of blood from the scalp in order to survive. Lice lay and attach their eggs to hair close to the scalp, and these eggs and their shell casings are called nits. Both live lice and nits are very difficult to see and can easily be confused for dandruff or hair spray droplets. Head lice are crawling insects. They cannot jump, hop, or fly. Their main way of spreading is from close, prolonged HEAD-TO-HEAD contact. While less common, using shared items such as combs, brushes, and hats is also a way for lice to spread. As a louse feeds on its host, it injects saliva into the scalp, resulting in local irritation and itching.

Physical Findings

- Presence of live lice on scalp and hair
- Presence of nits (small, round or oval, white speck looking) that are firmly attached to the hair shaft less than ½ inch from the scalp.
- Irritation and itchiness on the scalp especially around the neck area and behind ears. Sometimes a rash may be present to the skin around the affected area.

Management

Newtown Public School District adheres to NASN and CDC recommendations for management of head lice in all schools, also recognized as best practice by the Academy of Pediatrics.

Newtown is in accordance with the NASN position that the management of **head lice in the school setting should NOT disrupt the educational process**. As such, we do **NOT** have a “no nits” policy and we do **NOT** conduct mass screenings for lice. It has been shown that measures such as these are not effective in controlling head lice and can negatively impact the emotional well being of our students (NASN, CDC, AAP).

If a case of lice is suspected, the nurse will ensure the student’s privacy while conducting an assessment.

If a student is found to have evidence of head lice in school, the school nurse will contact the parent/guardian to inform them and will educate them on head lice treatment. The child can be allowed to stay in school until regular dismissal time, but the

parent/guardian can also choose to get the student at that time to initiate treatment. The student can return to school once treatment has been initiated.

No classroom-wide or school-wide head lice notification will take place following a parent reported or nurse identified positive case. The school nurse will track cases and use evidence-based practice for any concern of multiple cases in school.

The School Nurse will act as a resource for students, families, and the whole school community to increase the understanding of head lice infestation, effective treatment, dispelling common myths about head lice, and the importance of adherence with the treatment protocol and reassessment for recurrence.

For additional information see links below.

[Lice - Head Lice - Schools](#)

[Head Lice Management in the School Setting](#)

[Head Lice | American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[Head Lice: What Parents Need to Know](#)