

Head Lice Fact Sheet — No. 6

Head Lice Resources



HEAD LICE LAW? The rule requiring children be excluded from school if found to have head lice has changed. If a child is found to have live lice, it is no longer required to send them home. This applies to nits as well.

The rule change doesn't mean "exclusion" has to be eliminated from the district's policy. School districts can set their own policies to meet the needs of the school community. Talk to your district School Health Advisory Council to change or develop policies on head lice which may include topics such as "exclusion," or "parental notification". See the Texas Department of State Health Services webpage on head lice www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/lice.shtm for additional suggestions for policy development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that "No healthy child should be excluded from or allowed to miss school time because of head lice. No-nit policies for return to school should be abandoned. Because the child poses little risk to others and does not have a resulting health problem, he or she should remain in class, but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others." The National Association of School Nurses states; "the management of pediculosis (infestation by head lice) should not disrupt the educational process. No disease is associated with head lice Children found with live head lice should remain in class, but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others. The school nurse should contact the parents to discuss treating the child at the conclusion of the school day.... Research data does not support immediate exclusion upon the identification of the presence of live lice or nits as an effective means of controlling pediculosis transmission."

No Nit Policies -- The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses, to name a few, do not support a "no nit" policy in schools. A "no nit" policy is one that excludes students from school based on the presence of lice eggs whether or not live lice are present. While **DSHS does not** recommend a no nit policy, we do recognize that school districts may adopt one as a local option. DSHS does not have authority to impose a set policy regarding head lice on districts. **DSHS does**, however, urge school districts to ensure that its policy does not cause children to miss class unnecessarily or encourage the embarrassment and isolation of students who suffer from repeated head lice infestations.

Head lice infestation is a social issue not a health threat. No nit policies place a disproportionate amount of emphasis on head lice management than on real health concerns which should be a higher priority. This over-emphasis can lead to unproductive use of time by school staff and parents, missed classes, unnecessary absences, and parents missing work.



Visit the following Websites and other resources from the Department of State Health Services and related organizations for more information about this subject and other school health issues.

WEBSITES:

- DSHS School Health Program:
www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/
- DSHS Head Lice Website:
www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/lice.shtm
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Division of Parasitic Diseases:
www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/index.html
- University of Nebraska–Lincoln
<http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/lice>
- University of Arizona
<http://ag.arizona.edu/urbanipm/buglist/headlice.pdf>
- DSHS Public Health Regions – To find your public health region call: (512) 776-7297 or go to
www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/
- Medline Plus – National Institutes of Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine:
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000840.htm
- American Academy of Pediatrics: Head Lice Policy
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/2/392.full>
- National Association of School Nurses: Position Statement: Pediculosis in the School Community
www.nasn.orgNASNPositionStatements/ArticleId/40/Pediculosis-Management-in-the-School-Setting-Revised-2011

MATERIALS:

- School Health Manual – DSHS School Health Program (recommended for school nurses, nurse administrators, and principals)
www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/pgtoc.shtm