HEAD LICE GUIDELINES
For School Management

Eastern Ontario Health Unit
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Background

Head lice, or the medical condition known as pediculosis, is not a reportable disease under the Health Promotion and Protection Act. In fact, it is more appropriately defined as a social nuisance, not a health problem. Therefore, coordinated efforts between parents, teachers, schools and the community are necessary to control outbreaks of head lice.

Head lice is best dealt with when there is a strategy or plan of action. The aim is to control an infestation by prevention, early detection, prompt management, and effective education of teachers, parents, children and volunteers. Although this problem may not be eliminated entirely, it can be handled effectively to minimize the effect in the school community.

Therefore, this resource outlines roles and responsibilities, a school action plan, a guide for teachers, children, parents and the community, and a list of additional resources.

Note: The Canadian Paediatric Society states that “school exclusion due to the detection of the presence of nits does not have sound medical rationale”.
(See attached reference.)
Roles and Responsibilities

Head lice control works best when everyone helps. Parents, schools and the Health Unit all have a part to play to control the ongoing problem.

Parents’ Role

It is necessary for parents to assume the major responsibility for the identification and treatment of lice.

Parents should:

• Be aware of the signs and the symptoms of infestation.
• Be familiar with the technique for examining hair for lice and nits.
• Examine their children’s head weekly for signs of infestation as part of routine hygiene or more often during an outbreak.
• Notify the school and others (e.g. family members, neighbours) who have come into contact with the child who has lice.
• Be aware of the importance of efficient treatment and environmental control measures in the home.
• Carry out treatment using pediculocide. Consult with pharmacist or physician.
• Inform the school that treatment has been completed.

School’s Role: Principals and Teachers

Principals should:

• Distribute head lice information to all families of students at the beginning of the school year or when infestation occurs.
• Advise all parents and guardians by phone or letter when their child is identified as having lice or has come into contact with other students with lice.
• Manage parent screener/volunteer program.
School’s Role: Principals and Teachers (continued)

*Teachers should:*

- Actively promote and teach preventive measures for the control of head lice in the classroom.
- Report suspected cases to the principal.
- Assist in distributing literature to families.

**Health Unit’s Role**

*The Health Unit will:*

- Assist in providing training and educational material to schools, parent councils, parent volunteers and community agencies upon request.
- Help school boards and schools to implement head lice policies and protocols.
- Provide telephone counselling to the community via Health Line at 613-933-1375 or at 1 800 267-7120.
School Action Plan

When a student is identified as having head lice:

- Head lice identified by teacher, parent, or screener
- Note sent to office promptly
- Incident documented in office
- Information sent to appropriate persons
- Letter of notification sent to parents of children in classrooms where head lice has been identified
- Information package provided
- Maintain documentation
- Assess number of cases

An outbreak
(10% of student population or greater)

YES
- Note sent to Parent Screening Committee
- Notification sent to screen at home
- Children screening and follow-up, as needed

NO
- Monitor situation
Teacher Education Program

Goal:
- To reduce the incidence of head lice in the classroom.

Objectives:
As part of an education program, teachers should be able to:
- Identify the signs and symptoms of lice.
- Identify the risk factors for transmission.
- Identify problem areas in the classroom and use strategies for preventing classroom outbreaks.
- Teach students how to control lice.
- Notify the office when lice are identified.

Child Education Program

Goal:
- To increase students’ understanding of head lice.

Objectives:
A student education program on lice may be a difficult task given their development and others’ reaction (including parents, teachers and fellow students) to head lice. As part of the student education program, students should be able to:
- State that lice are not their fault.
- State that lice are not related to cleanliness.
- State that there are ways to get rid of lice and to prevent the spread.
Community Education Program

Goal:

• To increase the community’s understanding of head lice.

Objectives:

As part of the community education program, parents and volunteers should be able to:

• Distinguish between facts and common myths regarding head lice.
• State the signs and symptoms of lice.
• Demonstrate how to look for nits.
• State effective treatments against lice.
• State their responsibilities in reducing the incidences of lice.
• State their school’s/agency’s policy on lice.
References

► “Lice Giving You Trouble?” Healthful, Eastern Ontario Health Unit (January 2012)

► Head Lice Information Module, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.
   Community Health Services Department (1996)
   www.healthunit.org/school/headlice.html

► Lice and Scabies: From Infestation to Disinfestation, Reed and Carnick (1976)


► Adverse Drug Reaction Reporting Unit, Health Canada
   Tel: (613) 957-0337
   Fax: (613) 957-0335

► Parasites - Lice, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
   www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice

► Canadian Paediatric Society, Head lice infestations: A clinical update
   (Posted: Oct 1 2008 Reaffirmed: Jan 30 2012)