

# **SUPERIOR-GREENSTONE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD**

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*Section* Schools and Students

*Policy Name* Pediculosis Control (Head Lice)

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## **POLICY**

The Canadian Pediatric Society (CPS) states that children with head lice should be treated and can attend school or child care as usual. "No-nit" policies that keep children with head lice away from school are not necessary because:

- head lice are common among young children
- head lice don't spread disease
- cases of head lice are often misdiagnosed
- children can have head lice for several weeks with no symptoms

Head lice are tiny grey/brown insects that live only on the scalp of human beings. Head lice or pediculosis continues to be an annoying, year round problem especially with school-aged children. Anyone can get head lice, which are spread mainly by head-to-head contact. Having head lice is not a commentary on an individual's cleanliness or the cleanliness in the home. While getting rid of head lice can cause frustration and upset for families, head lice are not considered to be a health hazard.

The Superior-Greenstone District School Board will provide current and accurate information to school staff, parents and the general public on how to recognize, treat and prevent head lice in a safe and effective way.

## **OBJECTIVE**

Coordinated efforts between parents/caregivers, students, school staff, health professionals and the community are necessary to help families eliminate head lice and bring their spread under control. The best plan of action needs to include early detection, prompt management, and effective education and prevention strategies.

Effective head lice control is based on a high standard of education, prevention and accountability for both parents and staff.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **1.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

Cooperation leads to control and elimination of head lice. Family, schools and public health all have important roles to play.

#### **1.1 Parents'/Caregivers' Role**

- Become educated about head lice – e.g. Thunder Bay District Health Unit - Head Lice Once a Week Take a Peek;
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms indicating of the presence of lice;
- Know how to check for and identify lice and eggs;
- Know how to use effective treatments to break the lice lifecycle;
- Know the precautions which require the advice of doctor or pharmacist;
- Know how to prevent the spread of lice and reduce the chance of getting lice.

Parents/caregivers should not rely only on the school to inform them of the presence of lice. Check children for head lice and eggs, weekly, as part of their regular hygiene routine and more often when cases of head lice are in the school. Check also after activities where there has been probably head-to-head contact. Notify the school when you find your child has head lice.

- Respond quickly to bring your child home if you are informed by school staff that your child has head lice. (If you have already used a treatment product in the last few days, check with a health professional as to what to do next).
- Check the heads of everyone living with your child.
- Buy a product for getting rid of head lice, at the pharmacy. Check with doctor first if person needing treatment or doing treatment has allergies, seizures, is pregnant or breastfeeding, is under age 2, and/or is dealing with recurring head lice.
- Treat as soon as possible. Carefully and accurately follow the product directions. A second treatment may be recommended 7-10 days after the first. Reliable new products and Wet Combing (optional) are available for people who do not want to use traditional insecticides. Everyone living in the home with the child who has lice should be treated the same day the child is treated.
- Commit to following through until everyone in the house is clear of lice and eggs.
- Notify people at any place where your child could have been in head-to-head contact with others e.g. day care, friends, so they can check for head lice.
- Clean – vacuum furniture, carpets, and car seats. No sprays are needed.
- Wash bedding, towels, clothes used in the last 3 days.
- Accompany your child to school for a head lice check before returning to class and inform staff about treatment used. If you have been given the Letter to Parent/Caregiver, return the tear off portion.
- Arrange for your child to return home to continue appropriate treatment if lice are found.
- Do a second treatment with the head lice product 7 to 10 days after the first if the product directions advise this, to get rid of newly hatching lice.
- Teach your child how to minimize chances of getting head lice (e.g. no sharing hats, combs, brushes).

## **1.2 Student's Role**

- Cooperate with the person doing the head lice treatment and removing the eggs.
- Avoid head-to-head contact with others, especially while you have head lice.
- Comb hair frequently with a fine-tooth comb (a comb with very small spaces between the teeth) to help remove lice and eggs.

## **1.3 Principal's/Designate's Role**

Establish a consistent school action plan for eliminating head lice and controlling their spread including:

- The distribution of head lice facts and updates to families (e.g. Thunder Bay District Health Unit - Facts of Lice, September Newsletter, Head Lice Bulletin);
- Having a trained staff person will check if a teacher suspects a child has head lice;

- Having a staff person who will contact the parent/caregiver when their child is found to have head lice, to arrange for the child to go home and get head lice treatment (or have appropriate treatment continued) as soon as possible. (Provide information sheet, as needed, on Once a Week Take a Peek, and Letter to Parent/Caregiver of Child with Head Lice);
- Ensuring that a Head Lice Alert Letter is sent home with classmates of the student who has lice, to encourage their families to do head checks;
- Having a trained person available to check students (returning after treatment) before they go back to class to make sure they are free of adult lice;
- Reviewing the plan with staff and school community;
- Having caretakers vacuum any couches and carpets thoroughly;
- Ensuring strict enforcement of head check before returning to class.

#### **1.4 Teacher's Role**

- Watch for signs and symptoms of head lice (e.g. frequent scratching of head).
- Have a person check the student if head lice is suspected.
- Send home Head Lice Alert Letter to make families aware of the incidence of head lice in the class and need to do head checks.
- Actively promote and regularly review preventative practices to avoid spread of head lice.
- Speak to class about head lice and ways to prevent their spread.
- Continue to give Letter to Parent/Caregiver of Child with Head Lice to parent/caregiver and Head Lice Alert Letter to classmates;
- Make sure the child understands how to help, (e.g. sit still, help do the combing, no sharing combs etc.).
- Control the classroom environmental control by;
  - a) Minimizing activities involving head-to-head contact;
  - b) Requesting that caretakers vacuum any couches and carpets thoroughly when students have been detected with head lice;
  - c) Spacing, if possible, all coats, and if not possible, having students place coats, hats, etc. in backpacks;
  - d) Ensuring that students do not place hats and coats in a pile;
  - e) Discouraging students against borrowing hats and coats from the school's Lost and Found;
  - f) Temporarily shutting down of dress up centre and cleaning/bagging of dress up clothes and hats.

#### **1.5 Public Health's Role**

- Education – provision of educational materials, updates, and information sessions (Re: treatment, control and prevention of head lice) to school community, parent council, community groups, (e.g. in newsletter insert)
- The Thunder Bay District Health Unit has a number of resources to support both teachers and parents. The resources can be found at: <http://www.tbdhu.com/HC/HeadLice.htm>
- Consultation with school staff, students, parents/caregivers.

#### **1.6 Training of Volunteers**

- On the request of the principal, volunteers can be trained to check students for head lice for the purpose of controlling the spread of head lice. The possible role for Volunteers (at the principal's discretion).

- When informed of a child with head lice, volunteers check the child's classmates and students in the classes of siblings, to identify any other children with head lice. (School staff will contact the parents of those children, not the volunteers).
- Check classes of students for head lice especially primary grades in September, January, and after March break.
- Do a head lice check for a child who is returning to school after head lice treatment.

## **2.0 References**

The Thunder Bay District Health Unit has a number of resources to support both teachers and parents. The resources can be found at:

<http://www.tbdhu.com/HC/HeadLice.htm>

## **3.0 Appendix**

[Appendix A](#): Thunder Bay District Health Unit, *"Head Lice Once a Week Take a Peek"*

[Appendix B](#): Draft Letter to Parent (Student-Specific)

[Appendix C](#): Draft Letter to Parents (Class Notification)

## Head Lice – Once a Week, Take a Peek

Head lice are tiny grey/brown insects that live only on the scalp of human beings. They are a nuisance but not a health hazard, and a normal part of childhood and school life. They don't result from a lack of cleanliness. It is important for kids to understand that they haven't done anything wrong and that having lice doesn't make them dirty.

**Once a Week, Take a Peek** reminds parents about the need to check their children's hair regularly for lice as a normal part of their family's personal hygiene routine and then take action should any be found.

**CHECK** – your child's hair once a week. It doesn't take long.

**TREAT** – if you find live lice.

**REMOVE** - any dead lice and nits.

**RETREAT** - after 7 to 10 days. **Remove** any nits again.

**COMPLETE** – a lice check within 2-3 days of final treatment and weekly after that.

### Who can get head lice?

Anyone can get head lice. School children get them more often because they're frequently in head-to-head contact. Parents can get head lice from children. Sometimes the source is another adult in close contact with the children.

### How do lice spread?

- Direct head-to-head or hair-to-hair contact with an infested person.
- Sharing of personal items like combs, brushes, hats, hair ties, helmets, pillows, etc.
- Head lice crawl quickly from one person's head (or personal items) to another person and they multiply quickly.
- They have no wings and cannot jump or fly.



## Life-cycle of Head Lice

- Adult female lice can lay many eggs over a number of days and weeks. The entire cycle is about 3 weeks long.
- A female louse lays 3-5 eggs a day on the hair shaft close to the scalp. The eggs hatch in 7-10 days and it takes another 7-10 days for the louse to mature and lay their own eggs.
- Head lice live and breed on human hair only and their eggs won't hatch away from the warmth and humidity of the scalp.
- Head lice cannot survive longer than 1-2 days away from the warmth of a human head.

## What are the signs of head lice?

Itching and scratching are common signs of head lice. But often there are no symptoms at all. Because other scalp conditions also cause itching, the best way to check for lice is to look for live lice or nits. To be sure - take a peek.

## Take a peek! What do lice and eggs look like?

Lice are tiny, flat insects that are 1-2 mm long, greyish brown in colour, and are hard to see. Eggs (also called nits) are half the size of a pinhead, oval in shape, gray to brown in colour and can also be difficult to see. Eggs may look like dandruff but are firmly glued to the hair and can't be flicked off. The eggs hatch in about 7 to 10 days. Any eggs more than one cm from the scalp (due to hair growth) have hatched or died. Visit [TBDHU.COM/Schools/headlice](http://TBDHU.COM/Schools/headlice) for more information.

## CHECK: How do I check for head lice?

- Use a bright light and a magnifying glass if you have one
- Part the hair into small sections and look near the scalp, especially behind the ears and the back of the neck.
- Look for lice crawling in the hair. Lice crawl quickly and away from the light.
- Look for dark eggs attached to the hair and laid close to the scalp.
- Check all people in your house. If you find lice, treat them right away.

## TREAT: How do I treat head lice?

Use head lice products only when live lice or nits are present. Treating head lice usually requires 2 shampoo treatments 7 to 10 days apart. Head lice products kill the head lice and many of the eggs but one treatment doesn't kill **all** the eggs. Get a head lice shampoo or cream rinse from the pharmacy. You don't need a prescription. Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions. Follow the product directions very carefully. If possible, wear plastic or rubber gloves to limit your exposure to the shampoo. If you are on social assistance ask your case worker if the shampoo can be covered. **Note:** Shaving a child's head is NOT advised. **Treatment products are to be used only on people who have head lice. They will not prevent head lice.** Sometimes head lice resist one product. If live lice are found within 24 hours after the first treatment, consult with your pharmacist. You may have to try another product.

## First treatment

Timing is important. If the product is rinsed off too soon, lice and eggs may not be killed. If left on too long, there is unneeded exposure to the lice-killing chemicals. Rinse the child's hair under a tap (instead of the shower or bath tub) to limit skin exposure and prevent the child from swallowing any of the product.

### **Treatment Precautions**

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you use any product if the person:

- has allergies especially to chrysanthemums or ragweed or any of the ingredients
- has a seizure disorder
- is a child under age 2
- has a cut or infection on the skin of the scalp
- has lice on the eyebrows, eyelashes or beard
- is pregnant or breastfeeding and needs treatment or needs to treat other people (contact Motherisk at (416) 813-6780)

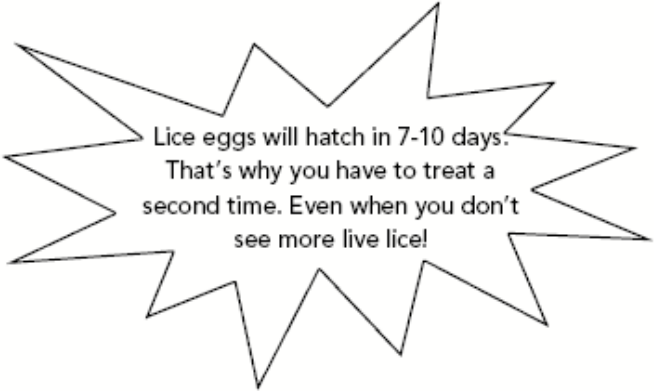
### **REMOVE: How do I remove all the eggs?**

Removing the nits (eggs) after each treatment makes it easier to see new infestations and can end your head lice problems.

- Sit under a bright light or sunlight. A magnifying glass will help you to see the nits more easily.
- Have your child keep still with a favourite book or show.
- Comb the hair to remove tangles then take hold of a lock of hair. Use your thumbnail against your first finger to strip the nits from the hair starting from the roots right down to the tips.
- Place the nits in a bag or the garbage. Pin back that lock of hair and continue until all nits are removed even those very close to the scalp.
- You can also comb out the nits using a fine-tooth comb (nit comb). Eggs very close to the scalp may need to be removed by hand.
- Repeat this process every 2-3 days.

### **RETREAT: Second treatment**

Apply the second treatment in 7-10 days, or as recommended on product, to kill any newly-hatched lice before they can mature enough to lay eggs or transfer to a new head.



Lice eggs will hatch in 7-10 days.  
That's why you have to treat a  
second time. Even when you don't  
see more live lice!

### **REMOVE: See above.**

**COMPLETE:** After the second treatment and removal of the nits, check the head twice a week for four weeks to make sure all lice are gone. Then continue to check weekly. If the problem continues, see a health care practitioner.

### **What do I do if someone in my family has head lice?**

Follow-up of all close contacts is very important to prevent the spread of lice and to protect your child from being reinfested. If you find lice, tell anyone in close contact such as family members, friends, neighbours, or babysitters. Tell your child's school or day-care centre, and the parents of all playmates so they can check their children's heads too. Everyone in the house who has head lice will need to be cleared of head lice at the same time to control the spread. **Treatment products are to be used only on people who have head lice. They will not prevent head lice.**

## **Do I need to wash or clean anything?**

After the first treatment, wash any combs, brushes, headgear, clothes, hats, bedding and towels used in the past 3 days in hot water and dry in a dryer on hot setting for 20 minutes. You can also put items in an airtight plastic bag for 2 weeks. Vacuuming things you cannot wash (ie helmets) is a good safeguard for any items that may have come into contact with those who are infested. No extra house cleaning or insecticides are needed. Lice cannot survive longer than 1-2 days away from the head.

## **Will they ever be gone?**

As many parents know firsthand, lice infestation can be an ongoing battle, especially in group settings. There's no doubt that they can be hard bugs to get rid of. If you've followed every recommendation and your child still has lice, it could be because:

- some nits were left behind
- your child is still being exposed to someone with lice
- the treatment you're using isn't effective

If your child still has lice 2 weeks after you started treatment or if your child's scalp looks infected, call your doctor or health care practitioner. No matter how long the problem lasts, be sure to remind your child that although having lice can certainly be very embarrassing, anyone can get them. Reassure them that as frustrating as getting rid of the lice can be, there is light at the end of the tunnel.



## **Points to remember**

- Close contacts who are not checked for lice are a common reason for reoccurrence.
- Head lice do not live on dogs, cats or other animals, only on humans.
- Keeping hair short and clean does not prevent head lice. Lice can exist in all hair types regardless of how long or clean it is.
- Discourage children from sharing hats, scarves, combs, hair accessories and helmets
- Head lice cannot survive longer than 1-2 days away from the human head.
- Using a lice shampoo when there are no live lice does not prevent them.
- Be patient and follow the treatments and prevention tips as directed and you'll be well on your way to keeping your family lice-free.

***Once a week, take a peek for lice on your child's head.***

## **Who do I call if I have questions?**

Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 807-625-5900 or toll free at 1-888-294-6630

Tele-health Ontario 1-866-797-0000

For more information visit [www.TBDHU.COM/schools](http://www.TBDHU.COM/schools)

*The Once a Week, Take a Peek campaign is a National Parent Campaign from the UK.*



**SAMPLE LETTER**

Notification of Presence of Head Lice (Student-Specific)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

To: Parent or Guardian

An inspection of the hair of this student indicates that he / she has head lice and requires treatment.

Recommendation:

1. Select one of the many products used in the treatment of head lice, all of which can be purchased from the drug store. Consult your pharmacist for product information.
2. Read carefully and follow the instructions accompanying the product. **DO NOT TREAT MORE OFTEN THAN RECOMMENDED.**
3. Do not re-treat without consulting your pharmacist.
4. Remove all nits (eggs) from the hair. This is a requirement for re-admission to school.
5. Check all family members to assure yourself that the infestation has not spread.

The school has additional information and resources about head lice available if required.

Return to School:

When treatment is completed and all nits have been removed from the hair, the student may return to school. Your child will not be re-admitted to class until his / her head has been re-checked. Please call for an appointment for a re-check at the school and accompany your child at the time of the appointment. Please do not send your child on the bus until they have been re-checked. If you are unavailable, please arrange for another adult to bring your child to the office.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Principal

**SAMPLE LETTER**

Notification of Presence of Head Lice (Class Notification)

**TO: All Parents of Children in \_\_\_\_\_ Class**

At least one student in this class has head lice. Please examine your child's hair; if lice or nits are present, please consider the following recommendations:

1. Select one of the many products used in the treatment of head lice, all of which can be purchased from the drug store. Consult your pharmacist for product information.
2. Read carefully and follow the instructions accompanying the product. **DO NOT TREAT MORE OFTEN THAN RECOMMENDED.**
3. Remove all nits from hair.
4. Check all family members to assure yourself that the infestation has not spread.

The school has additional information and resources about head lice available if required.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Do not use a head lice shampoo as a preventative measure. Use only when head lice and/or nits are present. Consult your pharmacist first.

Please notify your school if your child has head lice and if treatment has been required. Students must be "nit-free" in order to return to school.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Principal

## SCHOOL ACTION PLAN IN RESPONSE TO HEAD LICE

**Goal** – To assist parents/caregivers, students, school staff to eliminate head lice and control their spread.

