

# Dumas ISD

## School Health Services

### Head Lice Procedures

#### **Lice**

Head lice in school-aged children are common in the United States, and all socioeconomic groups are affected. Adult lice are about the size of a sesame seed, and are tan to grayish-white. (In persons with dark hair, the adult louse will appear darker). Lice do not carry or spread disease.

Head lice only move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. They are spread by direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Anyone who comes in head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice is at greatest risk. Spread by contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels) used by an infested person is not common. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Head lice multiply rapidly, laying little silvery-colored oval-shaped eggs (nits) that they glue to the base of the hair close to the scalp. Nits are most frequently seen on the hair behind the ears and near the back of the neck. Nits should not be confused with dandruff. Dandruff can easily be flicked off the hair; nits cannot because they are firmly attached to individual hairs. One significant sign of head lice is a persistent itching of the scalp, which is caused by the bite of the louse. Live lice survive less than one or two days if they fall off the scalp and cannot feed. Head lice eggs (nits) cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they do not remain under ideal conditions of heat and humidity similar to those found close to the human scalp. Therefore, they are very unlikely to hatch away from the head. Nits that are attached more than ¼ inch from the base of the hair shaft are almost always non-viable (hatched or dead).

#### **Treatment:**

- Contact your physician or pharmacist for an FDA approved head lice product. Head lice shampoo may be purchased over-the-counter or by prescription.
- Follow the directions on the product label to ensure that the treatment works correctly.
- Remove as many nits as possible. Comb out the nits after treatment. Use a fine-tooth comb that comes with the head lice product.
- Once a family member is identified with head lice, all household members should be checked.
- Some products recommend a second treatment in 7 to 10 days. Follow the product instructions carefully, and only repeat the second treatment as directed by the product or your physician.
- Launder clothing and all bed linens in hot water and dry on high heat. Dry cleaning kills lice and their nits if clothing cannot be washed.
- You can also seal clothing, stuffed toys, pillows, blankets, non-washable items, or other small soft items for two weeks in a tightly closed plastic bag. (Remember to keep all plastic bags out of the reach of young children.)
- Vacuum or sweep carpets, upholstered furniture, and mattresses thoroughly.
- Do not use a pesticide spray for your home. It is not necessary and can be harmful to children.
- Soak combs and brushes in some of the lice shampoo for 1 hour; or in very hot water for 5-10 minutes.

Teach your child not to share combs, brushes, hats, ribbons, and other personal items with other children. Regularly check your child's hair for signs of head lice as part of daily hygiene. Please be aware that hair length does not influence infestation; therefore, there is no need to cut the hair.

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#### Screening

Active head lice infestation may create a difficult learning environment for the affected student(s); therefore, the district maintains a program to identify and eliminate head lice. Children shall be screened by the school nurse with consideration for privacy and confidentiality. Mass screenings are disruptive and initiate unnecessary use of lice medication that can cause resistance, so Dumas ISD will not conduct mass screenings unless there are two or more active cases in the same classroom within the same week. When a student is suspected of having head lice or the teacher notices excessive head scratching, the school nurse shall inspect the child. When live lice are found, the school nurses shall check the student's household siblings that are students of Dumas ISD. A parent can call and request that their child be checked, but they cannot request that another child be checked.

#### Notification

Letters shall be sent to the parents of students with active infestations within 48 hours. Also, notification will be sent to the parents of elementary students in the same class as the child with lice no later than five (5) school days after the date on which the nurse, determines or becomes aware of the fact. Notices will include recommendations of the CDC for treatment and prevention of lice

#### Exclusion from class and Readmission:

The child may return to school the following school day, after treatment and if there are no live lice found by the school nurse. **The student must check in with the school nurse before returning to class.** Students are allowed 3 absences due to head lice within a school year that will be documented absences from the school nurse. All absences in excess of 3 within a school year due to head lice will be unexcused unless documented with a parent note.

#### Chronic and repeated cases:

Nits/head lice are not considered to be a communicable disease, but if a chronic, untreated infestation persists, your child may be sent home from school until treated.

- IF students are referred with chronic or repeated cases of head lice (three separate occurrences), the school nurse or campus administrator may require that the student be lice & nit free before being readmitted to class.
- A mandatory meeting may be held with parent, school nurse, and campus administrator to discuss the best outcome of the student.
- Readmission to class will require student to be accompanied by parent/guardian for an examination by the school nurse. If the student meets requirements, they will be able to return to class.

If you have questions please contact your school nurse.