

Head Lice: Guiding Principles for School Practices
Winnetka Public Schools
October 2016

General Control Measures in Schools

Recommendations	Rationale
Routine classroom or school-wide screening for head lice is not recommended.	The American Academy of Pediatrics discourages head lice screenings, which have not been proven to have a significant effect over time on the incidence of head lice in the school setting, and are not cost effective. Children should be checked only when demonstrating symptoms of head lice.
The American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advocate that “no-nit” policies in schools should be discontinued.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people. 2. The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families and communities far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
Provision of Parent Education programs may be helpful regarding management of head lice.	Head lice are not a medical or public health hazard, as they are not known to spread disease. However, parents may have misconceptions and prejudices, which place pressure on school staff. Educating and supporting the child and parent with factual, nonjudgmental information is better than having policies and practices driven by misinformation.

Individual Case Management

Notify parent or guardian by telephone, email or by sending a note home with the child at the end of the school day stating that prompt, proper treatment of this condition is in the best interest of the child and his or her classmates.	The school can be most helpful by making available accurate information about the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of head lice in an understandable form.
Maintain confidentiality when a child is diagnosed with head lice.	

Criteria for Return to School

Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun.	Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice. Do not check for nits (dead or alive) or enforce a no-nit policy for those who have been treated. It is not productive.
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Information adopted from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses.