Lincoln County School District Lice Information

This booklet is to give LCSD patrons an overview of the District lice policy, history and biology of lice, and some helpful hints about dealing with lice.

1. THE POLICY
In January of 2001 Lincoln County School District adopted a “live lice” exclusion policy. The goal of the policy has been to keep children in school and learning, to move the responsibility of checking for lice to the parents, and to decrease the numbers of students being excluded.

Only children who are found with live lice are excluded from classrooms and school until treated and no further live lice are found. Children with nits only remain in school, but parents are notified and encouraged to remove the nits and to be checking their child for live lice.

This policy follows the recommendations of the National Association of School Nurses, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Harvard School of Public Health, and the Center for Disease Control. These recommendations are based on current scientific research, which has found that “no-nit” policies do not reduce the incidence of lice and that children are often excluded who do have active infestations. Treatments to rid children of lice, particularly pesticides, are often more harmful to the child than the lice. Over-treatment, with lice becoming resistant to pesticides, has recently become a problem worldwide.

“No-nit” policies are costly and time consuming for schools. The most important facts in establishing any policy about lice is that lice do not cause or spread disease and having lice, though an irritant, is not a public health problem.

Since this policy was enacted, records have been kept at all schools. There has been a significant reduction in lost days from school due to lice without any large outbreak of a lice problem at any school.
2. WHAT ARE LICE AND WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?

Lice are small, wingless, grayish-white insects with flattened bodies, about the size of a sesame seed. There are three kinds of lice that feed on people. One feeds specifically on the human head (not pets or other objects) and is called the head louse. Head lice can’t hop, jump, or fly. Their legs are adapted for grasping human hair and they crawl well. Lice have been crawling on human heads since the beginning of time. Lice have been found on Egyptian mummies. (We assume the lice were dead.)

Head lice affect everyone. Having head lice has nothing to do with cleanliness or a person’s economic status. Head lice actually prefer nice, clean hair, which is easier to grasp.

3. WHAT ARE NITS?

Nits are the louse eggs. They are very small (about the size of a poppy seed) and are white to gray in color. The louse lays them close to the scalp, usually behind the ears or on the nape of the neck. A female louse lives about 3-4 weeks if undetected and can lay approximately 10 eggs a day. The nits are attached firmly to the hair with a glue-like substance. The nits hatch close to the scalp, so they can be close to their first meal. If a nit is found more than ¼ inch from the scalp it has either hatched or is not viable. Not every nit deposited by the female louse hatches and not every hatched nymph lives to maturity. Generally a person with an active infestation will have fewer than a dozen active lice on the scalp at any given time, but may have hundreds of dead and hatched nits, plus some viable nits.
4. WHAT IS THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE LOUSE?

Head lice can survive on a human host for approximately 30 days. Head lice generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host. A female louse lays up to 3-5 eggs per day. It takes 7-10 days for the eggs to hatch and another 7-10 days for the louse to mature and lay their own eggs.

Which Came First... the Itchin' or the Egg?

(The Life-Cycle of the Head Louse)

5. HOW DO KIDS GET HEAD LICE?

Lice are transmitted by close personal contact with an infected person or by sharing combs or brushes. Clothing has been found to be less of a transmitter than previously thought, however all elementary schools keep coats and hats separated and in backpacks or plastic bags. Elementary school children are more likely to get lice because of their close contact with each other.
6. HOW DO YOU TREAT A SCHOOL OR HOME FOR LICE?

Homes don’t get head lice -- people do. Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive. Pesticide sprays are unwarranted and may pose personal and environmental hazards. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and cars. Avoid an exhausting floor to ceiling cleansing of your house. Save your time and energy for that which benefits you and your child the most – shampooing and thorough nit removal via combing.

Some helpful tips if your child is sent home with lice:

- **Do not panic!**
- Focus your energy on treatment and education.
- Check family members and close contacts, but only treat those with live lice.
- There are many lice treatments available at your local pharmacy or stores such as Fred Meyer, Wal-Mart and Rite Aid. Some of these are non-toxic. **Read the directions carefully.** Do not let a young child use a pesticide shampoo without supervision. If you can’t afford lice shampoo the school usually can provide a bottle of non-toxic shampoo, or see the recipe listed on the next page.
- You will need a good lice comb or a fine toothed comb.
- Bed linens and clothing of the person infested can be washed in hot water at 130 degrees. Dry laundry on high heat for at least 20 minutes. You can wash combs, brushes, hats, etc in hot water. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and cars. **Do not use pesticide sprays.** They do not kill lice and may do you harm.
- Remember head lice and their eggs soon perish (in 24 hours) if separated from their human host. Intensive washing vacuuming will result in a cleaner space, but are unlikely to significantly reduce head lice transmission.
Easy and inexpensive head lice removal recipe:

On dry hair, comb in a bottle of plain, white, hair conditioner. The hair conditioner will stun lice for about 20 minutes. Start combing immediately with a good lice comb or a fine toothed comb. Put captured lice in a jar of hot water or a plastic bag and dispose in an appropriate way. (Plastic bag should go in an outside garbage can.) Wash hair and blow dry on high heat – be careful not to get too close to scalp. Do not cause burns. **Check daily** for at least 2 weeks to make sure no eggs have hatched. Continue to comb out nits during this time. Repeat treatment if necessary.

7. WHAT ABOUT ALTERNATIVE TREATMENTS?

There are lots of suggested alternatives to using shampoos, such as mayonnaise, olive oil, tea tree oil, etc. These are often very messy and not always effective. The School District does not recommend mayonnaise treatments because there have been documented cases of salmonella due to leaving mayonnaise on the hair all day and children getting it on their fingers and then eating it. Do not use gasoline or kerosene to treat lice. Shaving a child’s head is a drastic and unnecessary response to lice.

8. WHAT ABOUT “QUELL” OR LINDANE SHAMPOOS?

This is a very toxic pesticide and should not be used on children. Several states have recently banned lice shampoos containing lindane.
Some lice treatments “don’ts”

- Don't use shower caps and never leave the product on longer than directed.
- Don't use a chemical treatment on or near the eyes.
- Don't use a head lice treatment on a baby.
- Don't use lice sprays.
- Don't buy products that are packaged with Lice Sprays.
- Don't treat individuals who are not infested.
- Don't use treatments to prevent head lice.

SAFETY WARNING: Oils may enhance absorption, therefore, avoid using oil treatments, or oil based hairdressings or conditioners immediately before and after applying pesticide shampoos.

Tips for Prevention

1. Make head lice checks a regular part of grooming habits.
2. Instruct your children not to share personal items, combs, brushes, etc.
3. Wash hair daily – it may dislodge or damage some lice, but also provides a natural opportunity to check your child’s hair.
4. Notify schools, church groups, and your child’s friend’s parents if your child becomes infested.
5. Most lice cases are not incurred at school. Be aware of other sources of infestation including visits to other homes, churches, or youth activities.
6. If your child does get lice, don’t panic, get upset or try and place blame. Treatment and then consistent and daily combing is the key to controlling lice.

Resources

National Pediculosis Association
www.headlice.org

Harvard School of Public Health
www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html

Center for Disease Control
www.cdc.gov/