



## **District 35 and LICE**

It seems that every year there is a span of time when there is an increase in the number of lice cases reported to our schools. District 35 nurses try to respond to this by providing prevention and control education on the Nurses & Health website. Understandably, this topic can make all involved a little uncomfortable. Because of this, the latest research regarding lice from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is routinely reviewed and revisions to our current lice protocol are made. Without a doubt, the key ingredient here is: EDUCATION.

Our goal is to keep all of our students physically and emotionally healthy, as well as academically and socially engaged in a positive way. When there is something that poses a public threat to our students, we pride ourselves in taking swift action to protect all involved. It is a well documented fact that lice, although a huge inconvenience, do not pose a public health threat. Lice are not harmful as they do not transmit diseases, and lice are not considered highly contagious as they do not fly or hop. Furthermore, lice are not able to live more than 24 hours once they are unattached to an individual's head. As a matter of fact, experts say that only about 10% of head lice cases are the result of transmission at school. The other reported cases stem from family settings, child care, and sleep-overs!

With that said, sending a student home as soon as lice or nits are discovered, can not only cause that student to miss valuable academic time, but also can cause that student some embarrassment. We have students who are great sleuths and they easily piece together who was pulled from a classroom and left school early, with the "lice letter" that their families received later in the day. That can possibly lead to stigma and unnecessary exclusion of the affected student. We know that cleanliness is not a factor in lice cases; lice are not discriminating as to clean or dirty!

District 35's lice protocol is in compliance with AAP, CDC and the NASN. We no longer have a "no nit" protocol, however, we do treat each reported case individually. We feel that this protocol is the best for our district.

Once a reported case is brought to the school nurse's attention, the nurse immediately notifies the parents/guardians and encourages them to pick up and treat their child as soon as possible. The family is provided with information on how to treat lice and told to have the child re-checked with the nurse upon return to school. Families are also encouraged to speak to all individuals that have come into close contact with the child and to provide the nurse with any names that should be checked for lice. All siblings will be checked at the various schools. The classroom teachers are notified of a positive case of head lice in their classrooms.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that letters sent home notifying families of reported lice cases may violate privacy laws, cause unnecessary alarm and unintentionally reinforce

myths about lice. District 35 will send out a lice letter to families provided that there are several cases identified in a particular class room. At South and West Schools, if three or more children in the same classroom are positive for lice, the school nurse will screen the entire classroom. At Central School, any student identified as having close contact with the affected child, will be called down to be inspected by the school nurse.

Each of our school nurses will continue to handle each reported lice case uniquely and in a professional manner. We will keep the main goal of emotional and physical health, as well as academic success, for all of our students a priority. We are here for our students, staff and for our community. Please let us know if you have any questions and how we may best assist you.

Sincerely,

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