

Lice Information for the School Setting

Dear Staff,

I know that head lice can be one of the most dreaded parasites that we deal with in the school setting, let alone for the parents and families who really have to deal with ridding their families of it. It causes everyone's stress level to go through the roof.

A few important points to remember:

- Head lice do not hop, jump or fly. They do not have wings or hinged joints. They have to crawl off of one person/person's belongings and on to another person/person's belongings.
- The public school systems within our Michiana-area communities support only a "no-live lice" policy. This is based upon research from the Harvard School of Public Health and the concern that public school children were missing too much instructional time. However, remember that in the public system, each child has their own locker to stow their personal belongings in. We do not have that same amenity; our students are hanging their belongings either on a row of hooks with their belongings possibly touching another student's; sharing lockers or cubbies within some of the schools; or there is a big coat closet that house all of the coats, backpacks, etc. Therefore, we support a "no-nit/no-live lice" procedure within the Catholic schools.
- Based upon the "no-nit/no-live lice" procedure, if any evidence of nits or lice is present on a child, we ask for parents to pick up their student(s) and begin treatment. We try to help support them any way we possibly can. Once the parent has treated the student and removed the nits (eggs) or nit cases (egg shell of the louse once it hatches), the student can come back to school. We do check the student before returning to the classroom and make sure we do not see any live lice or nits. Even the most judicious parent can miss a nit/nit case or a few. If we find just a few nits or nit cases, we will remove them and send the child to class, knowing that the parent continues to keep checking the child. If we do find that the child is still polluted with nits/nit cases or has ANY live lice still, we send them back home for the parent to continue to keep removing the nits/nit cases/live lice from the student's hair.
- Remember: lice do not lay only one nit; they lay multiple nits up to twelve at one time. So if we remove only one or a few nits, then send the child back to class but we continue to communicate and work with parents, please know that this does not pose a threat to you classroom.
- If we are working with a family and know that the parent is treating their child(ren),

but we see another child within the same family have a nit or nit case on their hair, we may just have the parent come pick up the child, begin their treatment and check them when they are returning to school.

- Regarding checking classrooms, we will definitely check a class of students if the affected child has active lice present, or if the affected child has a head full of nits. But again, if it is a child from a family where they are treating other siblings and we only see one nit on a child's head, chances are this child has not had an significant active case that could be possibly cross-contaminating the whole classroom.
- Remember head lice is a parasite and is always out in the greater community at large. It is never about how clean a person is or about how clean their house is. Truth of the matter, head lice like clean hair better because it is easier to move around within.
- Please try to refrain from putting upholstered furniture or big pillows in your classroom that students will sit in/rest back in or plush stuffed animals that students will snuggle/hug as these are breeding grounds for bugs, parasites and quite frankly, germs.
- If you see students sharing combs, brushes, hats, etc., or if it's a Halloween party at school and a student takes off a mask or hat and another student wants to try it on, please help students remember that one person's personal belongings is theirs and theirs alone; it should not be used by another student. If you ever happen to see a student that is possibly in need of winter hat/ear band to keep their head warm but the student keeps coming to school without a hat/ear band, please let administration know. We may have resources to help this family.

Thank you!

Maureen RN and Katie RN