

## **LETTER TO PARENTS: Change in Head Lice Protocol**

Hampton School Health Advisory Board, in collaboration with Health Services, has recently changed its head lice management protocol. You may wonder why. This letter is to explain the reasons for this change and help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice.

### **Why did we make a change?**

Hampton City Schools Health Services Head Lice Protocol has been changed to reflect current standards of practice as recommended by the *Center for Disease Control (CDC)*, *American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)*, the *National Association of School Nurses (NASN)*, the *American School Health Association*, and many others. They all recommend that students with eggs and/or head lice remain in school and not be immediately excluded. When lice is found on the child at school, that child's parent/guardian will be contacted and will be instructed to pick up the student at the end of the day, unless excessive infestation is determined by the school nurse. If the student has siblings within Hampton City Schools, the school nurse will contact the school nurse where they attend to have them checked. The student's parent/guardian will be instructed that, after treatment and no live lice evident, to bring their student to school for the school nurse to examine. The school nurse will examine the child's scalp to ensure there are no live lice present. If the student still has live lice, then he/she will not be able to stay in school; the parent/guardian will be instructed to see his/her medical provider for further treatment. Once seen by a provider the parent/guardian needs to bring the doctor's clearance to the school nurse. If the exam shows no live lice the student may remain in school. The school nurse will recheck the student in 7 and 14 days to ensure no live lice are present.

### **Why Would These Medical Organizations Recommend This?**

1. **Although lice are "icky," they do not cause disease and are not dangerous to the child or others.** It doesn't make sense that children with the common cold, which is easily passed from student to student and can make some people very sick, are kept in school. But children with lice, who are not sick, and who can only rarely spread them to another child in school, and are in no way dangerous, are kept out of school, even if no live lice are noted.
2. **No matter how careful staff is to protect the privacy of students, when a student leaves a class and does not come back, most students figure out the child has lice.** This can be very embarrassing for the child and the family. In fact, the school usually does not know of most cases of lice because families are too embarrassed to tell us.
3. **By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had them for 2 - 4 weeks.** They have been in school this whole time, and usually no one else in the school has gotten lice from them. It doesn't make sense to immediately take them out of school as soon as lice are found.
4. **And most important, school is NOT a high-risk area for getting lice!** Over the last 10 years multiple studies have proven the school RARELY is the place of lice transmission. In the rare case of lice transmission at school, it is only among very young children, as in preschool or kindergarten, when they play very close together.

Friends and family members who often play or live together spread the vast majority of cases of lice.

The old-fashioned “no-nit” policies were based on emotional reaction, not on scientific evidence of how lice are passed on. In the last 10 years MULTIPLE studies have proven keeping kids with eggs/nits out of school does NOT reduce the amount of lice. “No-nit policies” are bad for the health, emotional well-being, and educational status of students.

### **What WILL the school do if a case of possible lice is reported or found?**

1. The school nurse will check any student reported to possibly have lice. If active lice are found, the parent/guardian will be confidentially notified, and will be asked to pick up the student at the end of the day, earlier if infested with head lice; they may NOT ride the bus home. The parent/guardian will be provided information about proper treatment by the nurse. The teacher will be informed of the live lice, and the child will not use any shared headphones, helmets, hats or clothing, until after treatment at home.
2. Parents of children with head lice will be encouraged to talk to other parents of close playmates. (You should consider this if they have had a sleepover or share helmets, etc.)
3. If no active lice or nits are found, but the parent or child reports the child has recently been treated for lice, the child will be checked again on 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> day post treatment.
4. The nurse will contact the school nurse at schools where the student’s sibling(s) attend. Those siblings will be checked and the parent will be notified if evidence of lice is found. Parents/ guardians will NOT be informed of other children who have lice in school, as that is a breach of privacy and the risk of getting lice from a classmate is very small!
5. The student with lice will be checked when they return to school. The parent MUST bring the student to the clinic for clearance, and the school nurse will check again at 7 and 14 days post treatment, which encompasses the full life cycle of lice.
6. If the child with lice is very young, the school nurse may choose to check classmates in preschool and kindergarten. A letter will be sent home with each child stating their child was checked for head lice in the elementary schools.
7. If a parent/guardian does not follow through with the proper treatment, then the child with lice will be excluded from school until proper treatment has been completed. The nurse may request the school social worker assist. **The parent/guardian must bring the student, post treatment and no live lice, back to school to get checked by the nurse. If the nurse finds that the child still has live lice the parent/guardian will need to keep the child home until all lice are removed and dead.**
8. Lice are very common. Lice have been around for a long time and have been very prevalent among your children. No school is ever lice-free, just like no school is free from colds.
9. If a student has several occurrences of head lice within a school year, a note from the student’s medical provider will be required for the student to return and the School Social Worker will be notified.

**Should you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to talk with your child’s school nurse or Health Services at 727-2363.**