

GCPS Protocols for Managing Head Lice

National Association of School Nurses Position Statement: It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that the management of pediculosis (infestation by head lice) should not disrupt the educational process. No disease is associated with head lice, and in-school transmission is considered to be rare.

Definition: Head lice are parasitic insects that live close to the scalp and feed on human blood.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, "head lice can be a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease."

Return to Class: The goal is to minimize school absence.

Gloucester County Public Schools Management of Head Lice

- a. If a student is noted to be experiencing excess scratching or complains of scalp itching, he/she will be sent to the school nurse for assessment. The school nurse can be used as a resource to help identify the presence of lice or nits as requested per teacher or parent/guardian.
- b. If the nurse discovers lice or nits, an attempt will be made to contact the parent/guardian by telephone or email to report the incidence and answer questions. A written parental notification will also be sent home with the student with live lice containing directions about how to treat a student with a pediculicide, and /or other preventive measures. The student will return to class, and the presence of lice/nits will not be cause for a student to be excluded from the instructional environment on the day the lice are discovered.
- c. The student will be allowed to resume normal activities, including riding the bus that day. The parent will be informed that the child will not be allowed to return to class until all live lice are removed.
- d. After treatment, the student will be required to report to the school nurse for recheck (to verify no lice are found) before being allowed to return to class. Should the nurse discover head lice upon rechecking, the parent will be required to take the child home and retreat. Head checks will be done on an individual, symptomatic basis. Due to confidentiality laws, letters sent to the homes of classmates will not be permitted.

The CDC (2010) cites the following reasons to discontinue "no nit" policies in school:

- Many nits are more than ¼ inch from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as casings.
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.

- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families and communities far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
- Misdiagnosis of nits is very common during nit checks conducted by nonmedical personnel.

Information About Head Lice for Parents

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

Today, your student _____ was seen by the school nurse, and noted to have head lice. In an effort to follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control, The American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Nurses, it is the position of Gloucester County Public Schools to allow children who have lice to remain in the learning environment on the day the lice are discovered. We do ask that you please treat your child's head, but it is not necessary for your student to be dismissed early from class on the day the lice are found. The lice will, however, need to be removed before the child returns to school and removal has been verified by the school nurse. If live lice are found upon recheck, the child will need to return home.

Treatment for head lice is recommended for persons who have an active infestation. All household members and close contacts should be checked for head lice; those with live lice or nits within 1 cm of the scalp should be treated. It is important to treat family members who share a bed with the person with the infestation, even if no live lice are found.

Please treat your student's head with an over the counter pediculicide, follow the directions on the package. This treatment is a special shampoo which is to be applied to the student's head to kill the live lice; it can be purchased at drug stores, or Wal-Mart. It is not necessary to remove nits after treatment with a pediculicide, however, you may want to remove them for appearance reasons. Check your student's hair daily for head lice for about two weeks. You may need to retreat after 10 days if you find new head lice. There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.

Your home environment will need to be treated to get rid of lice and to prevent a reoccurrence. Please vacuum furniture, rugs, and car seats. You will also need to wash recently used hats, jackets, towels, pillows and bedding in hot water, followed by drying them on a hot cycle. If you are unable to wash your student's stuffed animals, they can be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks. Personal items, such as combs, brushes and hairclips should also be washed and sanitized (boil for 5 minutes), or thrown away if they were exposed to a person with head lice. Advise your child to avoid sharing hats, brushes, or barrettes with other children. Always check your child's head before and after a camping trip or sleepover.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.