



7301: Head Lice (A/P)

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BACKGROUND

This Administrative Procedure is intended to provide guidance to parents/guardians and school district employees for the detection and treatment of Head Lice on students. The school has a role to play in educating staff, students, and parents about the early detection, treatment, and prevention of head lice infestations. The school shall make information on treatment options available.

Head lice infestation management procedures shall reflect current research on the detection and treatment of lice infestations. These procedures shall be reviewed on a regular basis. All interventions should be collaboratively planned with parents/guardians. The dignity of the student and family shall be respected in the implementation of this policy. Students with head lice infestations should not be excluded from school.

GUIDING RESOURCES

Vancouver Island Health Authority, Public Health Nursing will provide consultation services to schools to develop an education plan to address Lice Management. The Public Health Nurses will also participate with school personnel to address issues of persistent and chronic head lice infestations. Island Health Authority provides a management guide to support parent/guardians and school districts to manage head lice on students.

HEAD LICE DESCRIBED

Head Lice are tiny insects, about the size of a sesame seed, that live only on the human head. Head Lice cannot jump or fly but move very quickly on dry hair making them difficult to see. Mature Head Lice lay 10 eggs (called nits) each day, and “glue” the nit to hair very close to the scalp. Nits vary in colour and look like dandruff but cannot be brushed or blown away. The nit shell remains attached to hair after hatching. A nit found more than ½ inch from the scalp is likely an empty eggshell. A nit hatches as a baby louse 7 to 10 days after it is laid and becomes an adult in another 7 to 10 days. An adult has a life span of approximately 20 days. At the adult stage the louse mates, lay eggs and moves to other heads.

PROCEDURE

The identification, management and treatment of head lice shall be a cooperative endeavor between the family and the school community, with primary responsibility resting with the parent/guardian. As mentioned above, Public Health Nurses are also available to join this collaborative response, when appropriate.

Procedures to be followed for suspected and confirmed head lice infestations are referred to in the this Administrative Procedure,



in the Management Guide provided by Island Health - [head-lice-management-guidelines.pdf](#) and on the Vancouver Island Health Authority website - [Head Lice | Island Health](#)

Island Health Recommends

- students continue to be included in all school activities when lice are suspected or confirmed
- regular head lice screening be performed at home by the family using the [wet combing method](#) to improve accuracy and maintain confidentiality
- families learn the benefits and risks of the various treatment methods for head lice

DETECTION AND SPREADING

Head Lice are difficult to see, so having head lice is often confirmed when:

- your child is scratching their head more often than usual,
- your child's playmates are known to have head lice,
- you receive a note from the school that head lice has been detected in the school,
- shampooing, rinsing and wet combing your child's hair you detect the presence of lice and/or nits.

There are many myths how Head Lice spread from one person to another. Head Lice do not live long when off the head, so spreading from body clothing and bedding is very rare. The most common method of spreading head lice is direct head-to head contact during play or activities where children are in close contact such as group reading. Sharing personal items such as hats, caps, toques, combs and brushes, also spreads head lice

TREATMENT

The basic method is to remove the lice and unhatched nits from the head. Because head lice do not move quickly when the hair is wet.

- Island Health recommends a simple treatment involving a normal shampoo, plenty of inexpensive regular conditioner or crème rinse, and thorough combing with a fine-toothed lice comb while the conditioner is on the hair. The Health Unit has brochures, videos and other information to fully explain this treatment method. [wet-combing-head-lice-removal.pdf](#)
- Parents or Guardians are responsible for treating head lice. However, it is recognized that children will come to school with head lice and the school district will provide support to the parent/guardian to rid the students of head lice.
- Teachers and/or Principals shall
 - advise the parent/guardian if lice are detected on the student's head or detected in the student's classroom. Information, including information from the Public Health Unit will be made available to the parent/guardian. The Health Unit is available to assist parents/guardians with effective treatment techniques.



ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Head Lice is not normally a physical health risk, but serious cases can result in a bleeding and infected scalp because of excessive scratching. The presence of lice, and particularly the more visible nits, is more often a social issue. Chronic or repeat infestations can be very worrisome to the student, other students in the class or school, the parent/guardian, other parents/guardians, teachers and other school staff.

Only after meaningful attempts to treat the student where results are unsuccessful, including discussions with and treatments by the parent/guardian, a referral to the Public Health Unit and/or other appropriate agencies, and cooperation between parent/guardian and school staff, should a student be temporarily restricted from attending school, while ongoing treatment occurs by parent/guardian.

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Pacific Rim School District Policy XXX: Head Lice (P)

Pacific Rim School District AP 7300: Communicable Diseases (AP)

Island Health Authority - [Head Lice | Island Health](#)

Island Health – Healthy Schools - [Healthy Schools | Island Health](#)

HealthLink BC - [Head lice | HealthLink BC](#)

Head Lice Management Guidelines 2017 - [head-lice-management -Island Health.pdf](#)

Island Health – Wet Combing -[wet-combing-head-lice-removal.pdf](#)