

HEAD LICE IN SCHOOLS

Background

The goal of this Administrative Procedure is to endorse and support the use of the least invasive, evidence-based methods for detecting, reducing and managing head lice for children and families. The District supports the role of Island Health personnel in assisting families with head lice and public health concerns in the community.

Head lice are common, especially among children between the ages of 3 to 12, head lice do not spread any diseases but itching can develop in infested individuals. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

Head lice cannot hop, fly or crawl; they are transmitted when the head of an infested individual comes in direct contact with the head of another. Rarely, head lice may be spread through the belongings of an infested individual such as combs, brushes or hats. The identification, management and treatment of head lice shall be a cooperative endeavour between the family, the school community, and Island Health, with primary responsibility of checking and treatment resting with parents. At all times, school must safeguard the protection of privacy of students and parents.

Procedures

To ensure a common approach to the management of head lice in the District, the following procedures are provided:

1. To meet the needs of individual school communities, a consultative process shall be developed. The process must involve the PAC, Island Health and school staff.
 - 1.1. Discuss current process as needed with PAC and staff.
 - 1.2. Share current research and best practices.
2. Students are to be examined on a regular basis for the presence of head lice. Current relevant information shall be available to the school community early in each school year.
 - 2.1. Island Health personnel, in partnership with our schools, will:
 - 2.1.1. Offer appropriate training and tools as requested.
 - 2.1.2. Publish relevant information in newsletter(s), and on the District website.
 - 2.1.3. Make videos and print materials available to the school community.
3. When the Principal is notified of head lice, communication with other parents shall take place in a timely and sensitive manner.
 - 3.1. Written notification shall be given where and when appropriate, following the school's procedures.

- 3.2. Notification shall include general information about head lice and treatment alternatives.
4. Upon notification parents may choose to temporarily withdraw their child from school for immediate treatment. However, no child will be prohibited from attending or participating at school because of head lice.
5. Treatment is to take place in a timely manner and shall include the recommended protocol as outlined by Island Health (see HealthlinkBC at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>)
6. School PACs may consider purchasing treatment products to be available for the parent community.
7. Island Health recommends wet combing (sometimes known as “bug busting”) as the preferred method of lice control. This wet-combing method has been adopted in several British Columbia health authorities and in countries such as Great Britain and Australia. The method is well-researched and the key to effective “bug-busting” is frequent, systematic and proper use of the comb. See the District website at: www.sd71.bc.ca.
8. Suggested Goals in Support of Lice Management Program for Schools
 - 8.1. Educate families, teachers, school staff, students and community to increase awareness of facts and decrease belief in myths, decrease the occurrence of head lice, and share best practices about treatment for head lice.
 - 8.2. Use various media to provide regular information – school newsletters and information boards, staff room boards and newspaper articles. Develop a long-term education program for the school and community.

Reference: Sections 7, 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act
Child, Family and Community Service Act
Island Health Recommended Head Lice Management
American Academy of Pediatrics. Clinical Report – Head Lice, July 26, 2010, Pediatrics.
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/2/392.full.pdf>
Canadian Pediatric Society, Head Lice, http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice
HealthLinkBC, Head Lice, <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>
Interior Health website on head lice management, which includes a power point presentation and video on the treatment of head lice,
<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/SchoolHealth/HeadLice/Pages/default.aspx>

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