



## SD#10 (Arrow Lakes) District Protocol

### Responding To Head Lice

#### Overview

School District 10 follows the guidelines set for head lice management written by Interior Health:

*“Head lice can affect anyone. Head lice are annoying and may cause itching, but they do not transmit or cause disease. Children and adult’s reactions to head lice can subject children to teasing, bullying and isolation. People’s reactions to head lice can significantly interfere with a child’s emotional well-being, social status in the classroom and ability to learn. For these reasons, head lice infestations should be treated.*

*Current research shows that school exclusion, early dismissal and no-nit policies do not prevent or control head lice infestations. In fact, these practices further stigmatize children, erode their self-esteem and interfere with learning. No-nit policies in schools and daycares are discouraged by both the Canadian Pediatric Society and American Academy of Pediatrics.*

*Interior Health does not support school exclusion, early dismissal and no-nit policies as these disrupt the education process and adversely affect children’s self-esteem and social status in the classroom.*

*Due to frequent misdiagnosis and over diagnosis of head lice, school screening teams are not encouraged.”*

#### From ‘Recommended Head Lice Management’ Interior Health November 2014

Schools should therefore follow these procedures:

1. If a case of head lice is reported by the family to the school the school must circulate a letter to all parents via email or by hand to state that a case of head lice has been identified in the school and to advise parents on how to treat the infestation. A message can also be placed on the school’s social media page.
2. The school must not exclude the child from classes.
3. In an elementary class the teacher should take precaution to keep students’ coats apart following the report of an incident.
4. Schools should actively discourage sharing hats and hairbrushes following the report of an incident.

**If school staff identify a case of head lice then follow these procedures:**

5. Contact the family and explain that a staff member believes that their child has head lice. Recommend that the parent come to the school to examine their child and recommend that the child is treated at home before they return to school.
6. If the parent confirms the case of lice then follow the above procedures.
7. If the parent is unable to treat the lice following the phone call then in the elementary classroom the teacher will need to take precautions to keep clothing apart. The teacher can suggest to the child that they wear a hat for the rest of the day.
8. If a child has more three or more repeated cases of an infestation then the school should call the public health nurse for advice on how to proceed.

**Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians:**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Head lice have been identified in the secondary school. In order to prevent their spread please check your child's hair and scalp carefully. According to Interior Health head lice do not spread disease and are not considered a health risk. However they can be quite uncomfortable and unpleasant. They can also interfere with a child's emotional well-being, social status in the classroom and ability to learn. For these reasons head lice infestations should be treated.

Step 1: Find a comfortable well-lit spot.

Step 2: Check the head from the scalp to the end of the hair strand. First, look at the hair at the back of the neck, behind and above the forehead. Then, check the rest of the head.

Step 3: You are looking for live lice and/or eggs. Nits (eggs) are glued to hair close to the scalp (6mm or ¼ inch). Nits are white to light brown in colour and may be confused with dandruff. Nits are firmly attached to the hair and do not move unless you slide them down the hair strand.

Step 4: If you find a louse or nit, check all household members. Treat only those who have head lice or nits, following Option A or B (see following). Please also read the information on alternative treatments.

Step 5: Let the school know if your child has had lice or nits.

Step 6: We ask that students stay at home until treatment is complete and all signs of lice and nits are gone. School work will be made available while treatment is occurring at home. As directed by Interior Health "Children should not be excluded from the community or school due to head lice. If there are problems with the treatment, parents are encouraged to consult a public health nurse for information and resources."

Do refer to advice for treatment at <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>

Remember:

- Make weekly head checks part of your routine.
- Scratching and itching of the scalp may be a sign of head lice.
- If your child has long hair, keep it tied back.
- Don't share hairbrushes, combs or hats.

Closing remarks.