

## HEAD LICE PROCEDURE

### **Background**

Lice do not transmit any diseases and are considered a 'nuisance' rather than a public health problem by the Health Department as well as the Centers for Disease Control and most doctors.

Lice can only crawl; they do not jump or fly. This means that head-to-head contact is the most likely way to contract lice. By the time lice infestations are noticeable, the student has typically had lice for a month, therefore screenings are not effective in reducing the amount of head lice in a school at any given time. Education and prevention efforts are better uses of time.

Lice do not live more than 24-48 hours without a human host. It is recommended that parents check their child's head for the presence of lice and nits (eggs) on a weekly basis. Keeping long hair in braids or ponytails, not sharing combs, hats or hair accessories may be helpful in preventing transmission.

### **Recommended Classroom Practices**

Avoid activities that would lead to head-to-head contact among students. Have students place their coats in backpacks. Be sure students do not share brushes, combs, hats or scarves. Notify the office or school nurse about any head lice concerns. Remember that confidentiality is important to students and families who are affected by head lice.

### **Procedures for Handling Head Lice**

1. If a teacher believes a student has head lice, they should send the student to the office so that a head check can be done discreetly. Head checks will only be done by office staff or school nurse, not classroom helpers, parent volunteers or other untrained staff members.
2. If nits/live lice are present, the office or school nurse will notify the home by phone or letter and a copy of the Lice Aren't Nice booklet from the Washington State Department of Health will be sent home. If there are nits present, the student may return to class for the rest of the school day. If there are live lice, the office/nurse will attempt to have a parent come pick up their child. If a parent is unable to be reached, the child will return to class for the remainder of the day.
3. The office staff or school nurse may check students that have had close contact with active head lice, at their discretion.
4. When the student returns to school, the parent will bring the student to the office. Office staff or school nurse will check the student to verify that progress has been made.
5. If two or more students from the same class are found to have head lice at the same time, the office staff or school nurse will send home a letter to parents of all students in the class, asking that they check their child at home.

**NASN (National Association of School Nurses) does not recommend the practice of checking for head lice on all students classroom wide. This will help maintain student privacy, the family's right to confidentiality, prevent stigmatization and avoid disruption of the educational process.**