

Head Lice (Pediculosis)

Elgin ISD Head Lice Procedures:

As soon as a case of head lice is reported to the school nurse, campus administration will be informed. Classroom screenings will be performed for elementary classes to address concerns of possible additional cases within the same class.

In accordance with the Texas Administrative Code, a student shall be excluded from attendance for having or suspected of having head lice (pediculosis) until one medicated shampoo or lotion treatment has been given. In addition, Elgin ISD requires, upon completion of initial treatment, that the parent accompany their child to the school's office so the student can be screened by the school nurse or other designated school personnel. If no improvement is seen, the student will be excluded from school until successfully treated.

What are lice?

Lice are small grayish-white insects, 1/16 to 1/8 inches long, shaped like a football. They don't usually carry disease, but can cause your child and family discomfort, stress and sometimes skin irritation.

Do all children get head lice?

Children get head lice or **Pediculosis (pe-dic-u-lo-sis)** almost as much as the common cold. Millions get it at least one time, once a year. Children get lice more than teens or adults and, ANY child can get head lice! It does not matter where they live or go to school; how much money they have; or, if boy or girl, black, white or brown.

A child is not sick or unclean if they have head lice. Taking baths will not kill lice or keep children from getting lice. And, if a child has head lice, it certainly does not mean they have bad parents. Dealing with lice is difficult, sometimes embarrassing and can be overwhelming to anyone caring for children.

How would I know if my child has head lice?

Itching is the first sign, unless your child has a very light case. Check your child's head and scalp when scratching begins. Check for lice and their eggs or "nits".

How did my child get head lice?

Lice cannot hop, jump or fly. They move from child to child through close body contact. Head to head play or being together on a mat at nap time can spread lice. Sharing combs, brushes, hair bands, hats, caps, coats, and even neck scarves spreads them, too. Sharing a locker or cubbyhole with a lice-infested child is very common. If left behind, lice can attach to your child while sitting on carpets or furniture. Lice can even attach to stuffed toys.

What is a "nit" and where do they live?

A nit is a lice egg. You may see the nits before lice. Each nit is attached to a hair at the scalp with a waterproof, cement-like substance. Nits are on the hairs at the "nape" of the neck (back of the head where the hair stops and the neck begins) and behind the ears. Start here first. They live anywhere; so, look all over the scalp. The grayish-white nits, about 1/32 inch (1 mm) long, are shaped like a long football.

How long do lice live and how many eggs do they lay during their life span?

Lice live on a body around 30 days while feeding on blood every 3 to 6 hours, and laying from 50 to 150 eggs. The eggs hatch in 5 to 10 days and become adults in 2 weeks. If not on a body, they die after 24 hours.

What can my family do to avoid becoming infested with head lice?

Once in a while, check heads for signs of lice. Teach your children not to share combs, brushes, hair bands, hats, coats, and even neck scarves. Remind them not to share nap mats, pillows, beds, stuffed toys and even sit too closely on furniture. Think about separating jackets from other students (e.g., separate pegs, storage areas, or backs of their own chairs).

What should I do if I think my child has lice?

You can take care of your child's head lice problem at home without a visit to the doctor or clinic. Treatments can be purchased without a prescription at pharmacies or grocery stores. Many parents feel embarrassed when their child has lice. Sometimes it helps to talk to someone experienced in talking to parents of children with a head lice problem. The nurse at your child's school, your doctor, and even the pharmacist can help.

Other places trained to answer your questions:

- Health care providers at your neighborhood or city health clinic
- City or county health departments
- Your area Department of State Health Services (DSHS) public health region.

Why do I have to treat my child's hair two times?

After the first treatment, you may not see live lice but you might see nits. If the nits are stuck to strands of hair 1/4 inch (6 mm) or higher from your child's scalp they are more than likely dead. However, if you see either live lice in the hair or, nits attached to strands of hair 1/4 inch or less from the scalp, than a second treatment is necessary. The closer the nit is to the scalp, the more recent the egg has been laid. This means live lice could be living somewhere on your child's head.

If you do not kill the nits, they will hatch and your child will have lice again – this time without any contact with another infested child! All products specifically created to treat head lice will recommended a second treatment in order to kill the nits.

How do I know if I really got rid of all the lice after treating my child's hair?

- Carefully follow the directions on the lice treatment package. If you think it is not working; try again. **Not following directions, is the biggest reason given for why treatment does not work.**
- Take out the nits, left after treatment and lice are gone. This is called "nit picking." This must happen after first and second treatments. Nit picking means removing any left over nits from every strand of hair on your child's head). Do this by sliding a nit up the hair shaft with your fingers or nit comb. Special nit picking combs are available in the store where you bought the lice treatment.
- Help your children, family, extended family members and friends know how lice is spread and treated.
- Check your child's hair from time to time for signs of lice. Catching it early, can cut down the number of treatments, saving time and money.

How can I kill the lice in my child's bedding and clothing and around my house?

Here are several suggestions:

- Launder clothing and bedding in water at least 130 degrees.
 - Δ **CAUTION:** Do not bathe or shampoo in water this hot! This temperature is for laundry only!
 - Δ Washing clothes and bedding **as soon as possible!**
- Dry cleaning kills lice and their nits in clothing that can be dry-cleaned.
- Sealing clothing, stuffed toys, pillows, blankets or other small soft items for two weeks in tightly closed plastic bags will kill both lice and nits. It's low cost too!
- Safe, effective, FDA approved chemical sprays made to kill head lice, are available over the counter. These are OK to use at home, school, in the car, or on things that can't be washed, dry-cleaned, or sealed in a plastic bag like furniture, carpets, car seats or any other large, immobile or non-washable item.
- Vacuum carpets, furniture and curtains.

How are combs and brushes treated?

Soak combs, brushes and other washable items for 1 hour in one of the approved lice shampoos or, soak them for 5 to 10 minutes in a pan of 130 degree water.

Should I spray, dust or otherwise treat my house or ask the same for my child's school building when children are found to have lice?

Lice don't hide in building cracks like cockroaches. Treating homes or schools with bug sprays or other pesticides would be a waste of money and could harm your family at home or children and teachers at school. Simply vacuuming carpets and furniture can get rid of any lice in these places.

What should NOT be used to control lice?

- Do not use hair dryers! The temperature would have to be turned up so high it could cause serious burns on the scalp.
- Do not use poisons or flammable liquids like gasoline, kerosene; and, paint thinner or insect repellent. Chemicals should never be used for the treatment of head lice unless they are approved by the FDA.
- Do not spend extra money on hair oils, gels, hairspray, or other non-medicated hair products including dandruff shampoo. They do not kill lice or prevent eggs from sticking to the hair or hatching.
- Do not use old-fashion remedies! Vinegar rinses do not kill lice. Nits will still hatch lice and your child will be infested again.
- Put those scissors away! Do not cut your child's hair to get rid of lice. Lice stick to short hair too! Waiting 7 to 10 days between the first and second treatments will give you the best chance for success; and, spending more time working in the medication throughout our child's hair during treatments will also help.

Resources

Visit these Web sites, materials, and other resources from the Department of State Health Services and related organizations for more information about this subject and other school health issues.

Web Sites:

- DSHS Infectious Disease Control Unit: www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/headlice/
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Division of Parasitic Diseases: www.cdc.gov/lice
- DSHS Public Health Regions – To find your public health region call: Regional Liaison Services: 512-458-7111 ext. 7297 or visit: www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions

Materials:

- Texas Health and Safety Code: Title 2, Chapter 38 - Pediculosis of Minors
www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/hs.toc.htm