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**Head Lice Policy**

Head lice are a common problem among school age children. Recent scientific research indicates that the greatest concern relative to head lice is social stigma, loss of school time and toxicity due to over-treatment with pediculocide shampoos. Bacterial infection due to skin irritation is the only known physical complication and occurs rarely.

Head Lice are self limiting. Inbreeding causes them to die spontaneously. Lice that fall off the head are either injured or dying and incapable of causing infestation. Stray nits on a hair shaft are not likely to hatch because optimal conditions only exist on the head. For this reason the “Academy of Pediatrics” and the R.I. Department of Health no longer recommend immediate exclusion from school for head lice and are strongly opposed to “no-nit” policies.

Head Lice do **not** jump, fly or swim and can only crawl short distances. The usual mode of transmission is through direct head to head contact. Transmission via clothing, hats, furniture and other objects can occur but the likelihood is low because head lice can only live off the host for 1 to 2 days. By the time head lice are detectable they have been living on the host for at least a month, with the average time being 3 to 4 months so immediate exclusion at the time of detection does nothing to control an outbreak, is not medically warranted and deprives students of valuable education time.

Based on scientific research and the best evidence-based management and treatment options, school nurse/teachers will conduct screenings of students suspected of lice infestation as needed.

Students found to have an infestation will be allowed to remain in school until the end of the school day. Classroom and other contacts will be screened immediately and if more than 2 students in the classroom are infested the parents/guardians of all students in the classroom will be notified. Parents/guardians of infested students will be given detailed instruction for a two-step home treatment (optimally day 0 and day 7 to 10) and encouraged to remove as many nits as possible.

The infested child will be allowed to return to school after the first treatment with a pediculocidal shampoo. The child must be accompanied by a responsible adult and inspected by the school nurse/teacher prior to re-entry to assure that the treatment has been successfully completed. The child and all contacts will then be re-inspected by the school nurse/teacher in 10 to 14 days to assure re-infestation has not occurred.

When repeated infestations occur for a child, at the discretion of the school nurse/teacher, a note from the child’s primary care physician may be required to assure the child’s safety and compliance with Cumberland School Department policy.

Adopted by School Committee: 5/14/1998  
 Revised by School Committee: 1/10/2008