

## HEAD LICE FACT SHEET

**OUSD Policy: *Students with head lice can be in school, but care and treatment should begin immediately after head lice are found.***

### What are head lice?

- Head lice are parasitic insects that can be found on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes of people.
- Head lice feed on human blood several times a day and live close to the human scalp.
- Head lice do not spread disease.
- The most serious complication of lice is infection from scratching.
- Head lice do *not* survive more than a few hours away from the body because they quickly dehydrate.
- Head lice do *not* leave the scalp unless they are dead, dying, or have been removed.
- Head lice *cannot* fly, jump, or swim.

### What are nits?

- Nits are lice eggs that have been fertilized by male lice.
- Nits must be within  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch from the scalp to hatch and produce lice.
- If nits are found more than 1 cm away from the scalp, they have either hatched or have died.
- Nits do *not* need to be treated with chemicals; check in 7-10 days for live lice

### How do head lice spread?

- Head lice are most readily spread by direct head to head contact.
- Sharing hats, helmets, hairbrushes, headbands, and other hair products can also spread head lice.
- Head lice cannot jump from one person's head to another.
- Head lice are specific to humans and do *not* live on any other animals.
- Having head lice is *not* a sign of poor hygiene, dirty hair, or lack of parental care. Anyone with hair - long or short, clean or dirty - can get head lice.
- Head lice are *not* caused by dirt and do *not* live in the environment.

### What to do:

- It is a good idea to wash bed linens, towels, stuffed animals the child sleeps with and dry with heat to eliminate lice or eggs.
- It is a good idea to wash combs, brushes, hats and other hair accessories in hot water each day to get rid of any lice and nits.
- Have children avoid head to head contact when doing group work, playing games, etc.
- Head lice can be treated chemically or physically. Instructions on how to treat head lice are found on the next page.

## HOW TO TREAT HEAD LICE

**IMPORTANT: TREAT ONLY THE PERSON WITH LIVE LICE.  
CHECK CLOSE CONTACTS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THEY HAVE LIVE LICE.**

### Chemical Treatment

An FDA approved over the counter cream rinse with permethrin (1%) has been shown to be the most effective treatment for head lice. Ask the pharmacist at your drug store to recommend a cream rinse with permethrin. Follow the directions on the label.

1. Before applying, remove all clothing from the child, waist up. Cover the child's eyes with a towel or washcloth. Do not treat in the shower or bathtub. Have child lean over the sink and only apply the product to the head area.
2. Apply lice product on dry hair, according to the label instructions.
3. Do not rewash the hair for 1-2 days after treatment. Use only regular shampoo for two weeks after treatment, no cream rinses or conditioning shampoos.
4. After treatment, use a metal lice comb to remove lice and nits from the hair shaft. Combing out any remaining nits after treating is recommended but not necessary.
5. Treatment may be repeated in 7-10 days **only if live lice are found at that time**; do NOT repeat treatment just because your child scratches or complains of itching.
6. Continue to check all treated persons for 2-3 weeks after you think they are clear.
7. If lice reoccur after two treatments, see your child's doctor to see if a prescription medication for the hair is needed.

### Physical Removal Option

If you decide to take the time to try physical removal of lice and nits with a special comb instead of using a chemical treatment:

1. Comb the child's hair every day for about two weeks to remove the live lice
2. Use good light, magnifying glass, and a good lice or nit comb to locate and remove the insects. We do not recommend 'electronic' combs or 'zappers' as they may not get close enough to the scalp to remove or kill eggs.
3. Sit behind the child, using a bright light, to inspect and comb through the hair, one small section at a time. Repeat until no more active lice are observed.
4. Good combs are inexpensive at the drug store. Combs that are metal with teeth very close together tend to work better than plastic.
5. Straight hair tends to be easier to comb, while hair with tight curls may be more difficult and even painful. This is something to consider in your decision to try physical removal.
6. Although it may seem that the hair is covered with eggs, there usually are less than a dozen active lice on the head at any time.
7. Eggs more than ½ inch away from the scalp are usually already hatched and do not indicate the presence of lice.
8. Hair should be cleaned and well combed or brushed to remove tangles before trying to use a lice comb.
9. Clean the comb frequently to remove any caught lice or eggs.
10. You may need several hours each night for several nights to clear up lice.

## OUSD HEAD LICE POLICY

The District defines a healthy and safe environment as one in which adults work together to provide the following environmental factors established by current research as necessary for the health and wellbeing of students with head lice:

- Educating staff, students, and parents/guardians about head lice.
- Establishing evidence based management for students with head lice.

The goals of providing a healthy and safe environment for students with head lice are to:

- Maximize academic performance
- Minimize absence due to unnecessary exclusion of students with head lice

To better manage and to limit the spread of head lice infestations, school employees shall report all suspected cases of head lice to the school nurse or designee who will examine the student.

**If a school nurse is not available, call Health Services at (510) 874-3750.**

**Note: Identification of nits or lice is not an emergency. A nurse will be sent to the site when available**

### **Nits**

If nits are found but no live lice, the school nurse or designee will re-inspect in 7-10 days; no treatment is necessary.

### **Live (crawling) lice**

If live (crawling) lice are found on the hair, the parent/guardian shall be notified by the end of the day via phone, email, and/or a note sent home with the student. The parent/guardian shall be provided information on the biology of head lice, methods to eliminate infestation, and directions to examine household contacts for lice and nits. The school nurse or designee may notify parents/guardians in the affected classroom to encourage them to check their children and to treat, if appropriate, and/or examine other students most likely to have had direct head to head contact with the affected student. **Note: If a decision is made to notify about possible contact, Information about Lice, District Policy, and checking for nits will be included.**

Parents/guardians will be encouraged to verify treatment as soon as possible after notification. If the parent/guardian is unable to afford treatment, the student will be referred to Health Services.

Affected students shall be discouraged from direct head to head contact with other students. The nurse or designee shall provide in-service education to staff regarding how to handle nits and/or lice in the classroom.

Information about the head lice policy and lice facts shall be sent home to all parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. **Note: information shall include the district head lice policy and lice facts.**

Staff shall maintain the privacy of students identified as having head lice.