

HEAD LICE TREATMENT

Head lice do not cause illness or spread disease. Research shows that “no nit” policies are counter-productive. The discovery of head lice or eggs on the hair is not a cause for a child to be sent home or isolated.

To summarize the many arguments against the “no nit” procedures and rationale for not doing school-wide head checks:

1. There is no objective medical or scientific evidence to support the adoption, enforcement or continuation of a no-nits procedure (or, for that matter, a ‘no-live-live’ procedure).
2. The electrostatic charge from checking dry heads may serve to propel head lice up to one metre, thereby increasing the chance of spreading head lice from one scalp to another.
3. Such screenings are often conducted by personnel who are not medically qualified to make a medical diagnosis.
4. The exclusion procedures have never been demonstrated to reduce incidence or prevalence of head lice in the school population.
5. The conclusions of the screeners are frequently flawed.
6. The condition of having head lice rarely results in anything more than a mild and temporary itching, and is not associated with other infectious processes.
7. Head lice are acquired mainly by direct head-to-head contact with an infested person (rarely via inanimate objects).
8. Head louse eggs (‘nits’) are, for all practical considerations, non-transmissible.
9. Exclusion procedures restrict educational opportunities for the affected students.
10. ‘No-nit’ as well as ‘no louse’ policies are discouraged by reputable organizations, including the Canadian Paediatric Association, the American Academy of Paediatrics and by the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Reference: Sections 7, 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act
Child, Family and Community Service Act
Island Health Recommended Head Lice Management
American Academy of Pediatrics. Clinical Report – Head Lice, July 26, 2010, Pediatrics.
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/126/2/392.full.pdf>
Canadian Pediatric Society, Head Lice, http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice
HealthLinkBC, Head Lice, <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>
Interior Health website on head lice management, which includes a power point presentation and video on the treatment of head lice,
<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourHealth/SchoolHealth/HeadLice/Pages/default.aspx>

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