



ALGONQUIN AND LAKESHORE CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

# PEDICULOSIS CONTROL PROTOCOL FOR SCHOOLS

*Working Together in Partnership to Help Reduce the Spread of Head Lice in Schools*

Revised October 2013



## **Pediculosis Control Protocol for Schools**

### **1.0 Purpose:**

To ensure that the issue and procedures related to pediculosis (head lice) are dealt with in a sensitive and knowledgeable manner.

### **2.0 Background:**

The Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) believes in supporting families in understanding pediculosis and its impact on students, family and school life.

The ALCDSB recognizes that pediculosis is not a disease or a health issue, but is defined as a social nuisance which needs to be managed in the best interest of students through the partnership of parents/guardians, students, staff and the school community. The treatment and eradication of pediculosis is ultimately the responsibility of the parents/guardians. The ALCDSB also believes that communication and education about pediculosis with students and parents/guardians are essential for fostering a relationship of trust and respect in dealing with pediculosis which may become a school issue when nits or lice are detected on students attending school.

Please refer to the attached "Fact Sheet" from the Hastings and Prince Edward Counties Health Unit.

Pediculosis (head lice) are tiny flat insects that have no wings and cannot jump or fly. Head lice live and breed in the hair on the scalp. They are about the size of a sesame seed (1- 2 mm) and are greyish brown in colour. They crawl from person to person by direct head to head contact. They do not carry or spread disease. Head lice feed on blood and cement their eggs, commonly called nits, to strands of hair at the scalp. The nits take approximately 7 -10 days to hatch.

The bite of a louse causes itching which can be aggravated and infected by scratching. While lice are not considered a health hazard, they can, if untreated, cause problems such as infection, loss of attention and social trauma to students (embarrassment and isolation). Lice do not hop or fly. They do move very quickly along the shaft of the hair, from head to head and to articles they come in contact with (e.g. hats, pillows). Head lice do not live on pets and will die within 7 days off the human body. Newly hatched lice must feed within 48 hours of their hatching.

Lice infestation is most common in the Spring and Fall. The most common indication of infestation is consistent scratching. Lice are sensitive to light and usually deposit their nits in warm, dark areas around the nape of the neck and behind the ears. This may change because of hair and head dressing.

### **3.0 Who is Responsible for the control of Head Lice?**

The parent or guardian is responsible for the control of head lice. It is the job of the school to encourage parents/guardians to take responsibility for the control of this problem and to educate them

on the prevention and control. Schools play an important role in the control of head lice because it has an impact on the educational program of the student. The school environment can affect the transmission of head lice because of close contacts between students and group activities. The school also serves as a source of communication between Health Care providers and parents/guardians.

#### **4.0 Protocol for School Principals to Follow regarding Head Lice in Schools**

At the beginning of the school year, in September, and in the spring, usually April, Principals should include the following notice in their newsletters:

Spring and Fall are the seasons when **HEAD LICE** commonly infest school children. Please check your child's head weekly. If you find evidence of head lice or nits, information about how to remove is available from your family doctor, school, health unit and most pharmacies. Information pamphlets are also available at the school.

If your school has volunteers who check students for head lice and/or nits, ensure that these individuals have training on the proper methodology for looking for lice and nits and are given instructions in how to deal with students in a diplomatic and respectful manner.

If a staff member suspects that there is a student and/or students in a class who should be checked, the following steps will be taken:

1. the staff member will report to the Principal/Vice-Principal (or designate) the symptoms noticed.
2. the staff member will arrange to have the student and/or class checked. Care should be taken that no student is made to feel uncomfortable or the centre of unwarranted attention.
3. if a student and/or students are found to have lice or nits, then the Principal/Vice Principal (or designate) should do the following:
  - Contact the student's parent/guardian(s) to inform them of the presence of lice or nits, and to advise them of their responsibilities to treat their children with the goal of eliminating any presence of head lice and/or nits.
  - Prepare **Form Letter #1** to be sent home with the child.
  - If the parent/guardian can pick up the child from school then the child should go home and the first treatment of the pediculosis shampoo can be given.
  - If the parent is unable to pick up the child, then the Principal/Vice Principal (or designate) shall consider one of the following placements within the school:

- Keep the child in class; or
  - Keep the child with another adult (EA, Principal, Vice-Principal) for the balance of the day. (The child should never be left unattended or working alone at a desk in the hallway).
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- The parent/guardian will be asked to complete the Notice of Head Lice Treatment (found on the letter) and return that section to the school once treatment has been given to the student(s).
4. The student and/or students may be checked again by a staff member or trained volunteer to verify that the child is free from head lice and/or nits.
  5. **Form Letter #2** will be sent home to other children in the class to make their parents/guardians aware that head lice and/or nits are present in the class. This procedure relies totally on the ability of the parent/guardian to ensure that the student's hair has been properly treated and that transmission is unlikely to occur. If re-infestation occurs then steps 1 to 3 above will have to be taken again.
  6. If the infestation at a school goes beyond individual cases, for example a whole class or 10-20-30% of the school, the Principal will inform the appropriate Superintendent for further intervention.

Attachments: Fact Sheet

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## FACT SHEET Head Lice (Pediculosis)

### What is it?

Head lice are tiny insects that can live and breed in your hair. They are a nuisance but do not transmit disease. Head lice are not an indication of cleanliness; anyone can get head lice. The eggs of head lice (nits) can be seen at the base of hair follicles or on the scalp, usually at the base of the neck or around the ears. They have three stages in their life cycle; the nit, nymph and adult.

### How is it spread?

Head lice are spread from direct head-to-head contact and may spread through shared items like hats or hair brushes. Head lice that live on people cannot survive on pets so transmission to or from animals is not possible.

### What are the signs and symptoms?

Head lice do not cause illness. They can cause irritation to the scalp which can result in an itchy feeling. If you think you might have head lice, have your scalp checked for nits in a well lit room. Your scalp should be checked again after a week and once more after two weeks.

### How are head lice treated?

Many treatments for head lice exist. Before buying any product, talk to your pharmacist. Many shampoos are designed to treat head lice and have proven to be effective. It is important to follow the directions for these shampoos carefully. Talk to your doctor before treating children under the age of two, or if you are pregnant or breast feeding.

Check the heads of all family members and treat those affected at the same time to prevent reinfestation. Extra housecleaning and use of insecticide sprays are not needed; however, washing combs, brushes, headgears, pillow cases, sheets and towels in hot water is recommended.

### How to prevent it?

Avoid direct head-to-head contact and sharing items such as combs, brushes, hair pieces and towels, etc. with individuals who have head lice.

### For More Information

Contact the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit, Communicable Disease Program, 613-966-5513 x349. Toll free 1-800-267-2803. TTY 613-966-3036.

References: 1. Canadian Pediatric Society. Caring for Kids, Head Lice.  
2. Retrieved from [http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head\\_lice](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice)