

## HEAD LICE

Head lice, *Pediculus humanus capitis*, are a common problem in school children in Mississippi. While head lice do not transmit any human disease, they are a nuisance, and require the effort of school officials and parents to control. Head lice can be controlled in the schools, but not eliminated. There will be recurrences even after control attempts are made. The objective is to decrease the problem of head lice and reduce their spread.

The following are control efforts which may be utilized by the school district:

1. School Screening

During the school year, students may be screened for head lice. Screening will be done by appropriate school staff who have been instructed in screening techniques.

2. Individual Cases

Throughout the year any student suspected of having head lice should be examined by an appropriate staff member. An indication of head lice infestation may be a child who scratches his or her head a great deal. Care should be taken not to embarrass the student and to assure that no stigma is attached. If one child is found to be infested, the whole class may be screened.

3. Examination of Infested Student and Removal

If only the lice eggs (nits) are found, the student may remain in class for the remainder of the day. Parents will be notified by phone or letter regarding appropriate treatment. If a live louse is found, the parent will be called to take the student home for treatment.

4. Return to School

The student may return to school after appropriate treatment has been given and there is satisfactory evidence that the student is free from nits. Neither nits nor lice should be visible upon reexamination by the school staff prior to readmission.

According to the State Department of Health, treatment with any approved pediculicidal (lice-killing) product should be adequate. Most products require two treatments. Parents must furnish evidence of the second treatment no earlier than seven (7) days and no longer than ten (10) days after the first treatment.

Treatment may be evidenced by a note from the parent describing the treatment or an empty bottle, with the label intact, of the product used.

It is not necessary to have a treated child examined by a physician or the health department. However, according to state law, if any student in a public school has had head lice on three (3) occasions during one (1) school year while attending school, or if the parent of the student has been notified by the school officials that the student has had head lice on three (3) occasions in one (1) school year, as determined by the school nurse, public health nurse, or physician, the principal shall notify the county health department of the recurring problem of head lice with that student. The principal shall not allow the child to attend school until proof of treatment has been obtained.

SOURCE: Miss. Code Ann. §41-79-21 (Supp. 1999)  
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