

HAZLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

Dear Parent,

Your child is being excluded from school today because the nurse, on careful inspection, found evidence of head lice (pediculosis capitis).

Head lice is a nationwide public health matter. There are millions of cases reported each year and parents become upset when their children are infested with head lice. DON'T PANIC. To correct the enormous amount of misinformation about head lice, included are important facts and tools that will help you detect and combat pediculosis.

TRANSMISSION: Head lice crawl from one head to another. The most common method of transfer is by direct head contact between two children. Transfer also occurs through infested headgear (hats, headbands, baseball caps, helmets), infested combs, brushes, carpets beds or upholstered furniture.

Head lice DO NOT fly or jump but crawl at high speed. They DO NOT infest animals. They infest people regardless of social or ethnic status. They are NOT an indication of poor hygiene or parental neglect.

IDENTIFICATION: head lice are tiny (-) wingless bloodsucking insects that feed on the human scalp. In our climate, they cannot live away from the human host longer than a 24-hour period.

A louse infestation is usually diagnosed by discovering nits or lice eggs. The nit attaches itself to the hairshaft with a cement-like substance, and cannot be removed without treatment. Dandruff and hair debris can be brushed or blown away.

TREATMENT:

1. Apply a lice-killing product to the hair according to your physician's instructions or package directions. Several of these treatments are available as over the counter preparations (RID, NIX & CLEAR).
2. **ALL NITS MUST BE REMOVED FROM THE HAIR. Re-entry to school will not be permitted until all the nits are removed.** Pediculicides kill lice and mature eggs but up to 30% of all eggs survive. Complete removal of all eggs is vital for head lice elimination. Sometimes the only way to accomplish this is to pull the nits off with your fingers.
3. The treatment must be repeated in 7 days, unless your physician gives other orders.
4. All family members and close friends should be examined for infestation and treated **IF** necessary.
5. Machine wash (125-130°F) and dry in a hot dryer all washable clothing, towels, and bed linens the child has come in contact with the previous two days. Remember to launder all headgear, coats, and hooded jackets.
6. Dry clean items that cannot be washed. Toys, stuffed animals and all non-washable items must be sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks.
7. Hair care items must be soaked in a pediculicide shampoo for one hour.
8. Vacuum all carpets, upholstered furniture, and car upholstery. Vacuuming will be more effective and safer than using pesticide sprays.
9. Continue to recheck **ALL** family members for a **TWO WEEK PERIOD.**

READMISSION: The Hazleton Area School District is allowing a **TWO (2) DAY** excused absence for pediculosis. **Your child will not be re-admitted to school until the school nurse inspects his/her head and finds it nit free.** She will then re-inspect his/her head in 7-10 days. This is done to prevent future outbreaks.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

School Nurse
HAZLETON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

(Revised, Sept. '99)