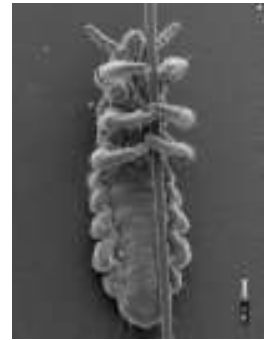


Head Lice for Schools



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Objectives: After this presentation, school staff will

- Identify at least 3 facts about head lice
- Describe management of possible head lice infestation in the classroom according to Canton Public School Guidelines

Head Lice: Historical Perspective

- Lice have been our companions since ancient times & have so befriended us, they can't live without us.
- Lice likely co-evolved with people; claws are well adapted to grasping the hair shaft.
- Lice don't jump or fly.
- Lice are host specific parasites so human lice don't live on other animals.
- Lice must feed off scalp, so they die within 24 hours of separation from human hosts; if they have fallen off hair, they are at the end of the life cycle.

Head Lice: What are They?

- A head louse is an insect that lives on the human scalp and feeds on blood.
- Head lice hatch from small eggs (nits) that are attached with a cement-like substance to the shaft of individual hairs.
- Eggs hatch in about 10 days. Once hatched, the head louse matures in less than 2 weeks.
- Female head lice may survive for as much as a month (most seem to perish sooner). Those more than about 2 weeks old increasingly become geriatric and tend to produce fewer eggs and less viable eggs.
- If nits are present, head lice have already been there—but may be long gone.

Head Lice: What are they (cont'd)?

- Rarely more than 12 live lice on head at one time.
- Most head louse infestations seem to cause little, if any, direct harm.
- Head lice are not known to naturally transmit microbes that cause disease.
- The greatest harm associated with head lice results from the well-intentioned but misguided use of caustic or toxic substances to eliminate the lice.
- Traditional pediculicides and alternative formulations or methods are frequently over-applied.

Head Lice: How do we get them?

- **The most common means of transmission is through physical/direct (head to head) contact!!**
- Indirect transmission is uncommon but may occur via *shared* combs, brushes, hats, and hair accessories that have been in contact with an infested person.
- Rarely, through *shared* helmets – don't live on helmets alone.
- Schools are **not** a common source of transmission.

Harvard Scheme for Managing Presumed Head Louse Infestations in Schools

Nits Discovered on hair?

Yes

No



Do nothing



Inspect hair for live lice;

May send sample to pediatrician office to examine via microscope

Educate parents ongoing scalp inspection at home

Re-inspect in 7-10 school days

Harvard Scheme for Managing Presumed Head Louse Infestations in Schools 2

Live (crawling) lice on hair?

Yes No  Reinspect in 7-10 days



1. Notify parent/guardian; **recommend that they call their physician for recommendations to treat head lice**
2. Provide information on head lice and methods to eliminate infestation

Harvard Scheme for Managing Presumed Head Louse Infestations in Schools 3

UNJUSTIFIED RESPONSES TO LIVE LICE

- Exclusion or quarantine
- Notification of classmates parents
- Classroom or schoolwide screenings
- Insecticide treatments to the school environment
- Reporting to Canton Board of Health in absence of other indicators

What staff need to know in response

- **Creating unnecessary panic in the school community is a disservice to students.**
- **We need to *educate* students, families, and ourselves based on fact and not fear.**
- **Don't let head lice interfere with students' opportunities to learn and achieve *in the classroom*. Missing school puts a child at risk for failure.**

Canton Public School Guidelines

- 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. The school nurse shall examine the student. An infestation shall be determined by looking closely through the hair and scalp for viable nits or live lice.
- If nits are found but there are no live (crawling) lice on the hair, the school nurse or designee shall reinspect within 7-10 school days.
- Parent/guardian of the student will be educated concerning ongoing scalp inspection at home

Canton Public School Guidelines cont'd



- If live (crawling) lice are found on the hair, the parent/guardian shall be notified to arrange pick up of their child from school. The parent/guardian shall be provided information on the biology of head lice, methods to eliminate infestation, directions to examine household contacts for lice and nits, and related treatments. The school nurse may notify parents/guardians of students ***who have had head to head contact 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. Parents/guardians should be referred to the pediatrician for follow up.

Canton Public School Guidelines cont'd

- **Parents/guardians will be encouraged to verify treatment as soon as possible after notification.**
- **Affected students may return to school the next day providing there has been proper treatment, as many nits as possible have been removed from their hair, and personal items have been cleaned or stored**
- **Students shall be discouraged from direct head to head contact with other students. If indicated, the nurse shall provide in-service education to staff regarding how to handle nits and/or head lice in the classroom.**
- **Parents/guardians shall be educated at the beginning of the school year concerning head lice prevention, beginning in the home setting. (In parent handbook, newsletters, web site, etc.)**
- **Staff shall maintain the privacy of students identified as having head lice.**

Resources

- Comprehensive School Health Manual, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, November, 2007.
- NASN Pediculosis in the School Community position statement <http://www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237>
- AAP Clinical Report on Head Lice <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;110/3/638>
- AAP Lice, Nits, and School Policy <http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;110/3/638>
- Harvard School of Public Health <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>