

All About Lice

The health office would like to clarify some questions and concerns regarding head lice and how this is handled at school. Minneapolis Public Schools follows the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)/Hennepin County Epidemiologists, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) regarding how to handle head lice in schools.

Current research on head lice indicates:

- Head lice are usually not spread in the school setting, but rather from head-to-head contact elsewhere in the community. In the rare cases when spread of head lice has occurred at school, it is among very young children and likely a result of them playing very closely together.
- Head lice move by crawling; they cannot jump or fly.
- A person can have lice up to 4-6 weeks before they feel itching on their scalp and half of people with head lice have no symptoms at all.
- Sending students home when they have head lice or eggs does not reduce the spread of head lice in the school setting and it may violate the student's civil rights.
- Screening students for cases of head lice is not effective in reducing rates of head lice in schools. It is much more effective for parents to regularly (at least every 3 weeks) check their child's head for evidence of head lice.

Based on current evidence, the experts recommend that students identified as having eggs and/or head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL and not be excluded (sent home).

If suspected lice or confirmed lice:

If a teacher or another staff member suspects a student may have head lice, they will send them to the health office to be checked. If active lice or nits (eggs) are found, the parent will be confidentially notified. The student can remain in school. The health office staff can help provide information to the parent/guardian about proper treatment.

Parent/guardians can help prevent the spread of head lice by regularly checking their student's head for signs of head lice. If head lice is identified in one family member, all members of the household should be checked and treated at the same time. A habit of weekly head checks can be very helpful. Wash and condition hair. Comb out hair with a regular brush, then comb through the hair with a nit comb. Wipe the nit comb against a white paper towel every few moments looking for nits or bugs. Please see the attached information from Hennepin County.

Parent/guardians can also help prevent the spread of head lice by:

- Having your child wear their hair up
- Teach your child not to share hats, coats, or hair accessories (combs, brushes, hair clips) and to avoid head to head contact with other children
- **Inform the health office if your student has head lice**

Further questions? Please contact the health office.