



PULASKI COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Pathway to a Brighter Tomorrow

Frequently Asked Questions about Head Lice

How did my child get Head Lice?

Head lice are wingless insects and cannot jump, **hop** or fly. They move by crawling, and are mostly spread by direct head-to-head contact-for example, during play at home or school, slumber parties, sports activities or camp. It is also possible but not common, to spread head lice by contact with clothing, such as hats, scarves, coats or other personal items, such as combs, brushes or towels

How do head lice spread and how long is a person able to spread them?

Head lice have no wings and do not fly or jump; or crawl. They are spread through direct contact with an infected person. They may spread as long as lice or eggs remain alive on the infested person.¹ **Head lice need human blood to survive. Head lice usually survive for less than 1 day away from the scalp, and their eggs cannot hatch at temperatures lower than those near the scalp. The eggs are incubated by body heat and typically hatch in 8 to 9 days. If the Head Lice is not successfully treated the cycle repeats itself approximately every 3 weeks. Head Lice lives only on humans-they do not infest pets**

Are Head Lice Dangerous?

Head lice are not dangerous. **It is important to note that head lice are not a health hazard or a sign of poor hygiene and are not responsible for the spread of any disease. If you think your child has head lice, it is important to talk to a healthcare provider to discuss the best treatment approach for your child.**

How do you treat schools for lice?

Schools don't get head lice- people do. Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs or stuffed animals. Pesticide **or fumigant** sprays are unwarranted and may pose personal or environmental hazards. **These products can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.**

Can you catch head lice from Headphones?

The extent to which head lice are transmitted to others via headphones is unknown **but is unlikely**. Ideally, risk of transmission can be eliminated by making sure you clean items between children by wiping them with a damp paper towel. An additional measure would be to have the children wear a baseball cap to help shield their hair from contact with the headphones. Headphones should never be sprayed. **Children may want to have their own headphones so they do not have to share them and they can be kept in a plastic Ziploc bag**

Where do head lice come from?

Head lice do not come out of the air, from the ground **or they do not live in mulch**. They are human parasites and have probably been here since the beginning of time. Desiccated (dried up) head lice and their eggs (nits) have been found on the hair and scalps of Egyptian mummies

Why are routine head checks not performed in the school?

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes routine classroom screening will not reduce the likelihood of head lice in classrooms and must be discouraged. Studies have shown that control measures such as mass screenings for nits, have not been shown to have a significant effect on the incidence of head lice in a school community, nor have they shown to be cost-effective. Some parents believe it is a violation of their child's privacy for the school to send out letters to all parents and do whole classroom checks. Some parents view this as a HIPAA and FERPA violation. Students with signs and symptoms of head lice should be sent to the school nurse who will handle it individually, same as any other health issue.

My child was fine when they left for school this morning, but they came home with head lice. It has to be coming from school, because my child doesn't go anywhere else.

Lice are transmitted from head to head contact. Children cannot get head lice sitting in a classroom or walking down the hall. The transmission of head lice in school is very rare.

Why are classroom letters not sent home when a child in the class has head lice?

Communication between school personnel and parents/caregivers highlighting cases of head lice (e.g., head lice outbreak letters to all students) has been shown to increase community anxiety, increase social stigma causing embarrassment of affected infested students, and puts students' rights to confidentiality at risk. When letters are sent home to everyone, some parents/caregivers panic and treat their children even if they do not have head lice. Unnecessary treatment can lead to resistance and over exposure to toxic chemicals.

Why is a child found to have head lice allowed to finish out the school day?

The American Academy of Pediatrics (Frankowski, Bocchini, & the Council on School Health and Committee on Infectious Diseases, 2010) with National Association of School Nurses and Center for Disease Control [CDC], indicates that no-nit policies should no longer be enforced because head lice should not be a reason for otherwise healthy children to be excluded from class. (From School Nursing A Comprehensive Text, 2013)

A child with an active head lice infestation has likely had head lice for a month or more by the time it is discovered therefore it poses a low risk of transmission. A child with head lice should remain in school but be discouraged from close direct head contact. Students can be treated and return to the classroom after appropriate treatment has begun.

It is unlikely that all head lice infestations can be prevented. School head lice protocol should support evidence-based policies and strategies for the treatment of head lice. It is very important for parents/caregivers to regularly check their child's head for head lice. Evidence-based strategies for the management of head lice in the school setting can reduce the incidence of infestations, the social stigma and caregiver strain experienced by students and families, and the negative impact on students' education.

Parents/Guardians should check their children's head routinely, not just when a case is identified in a school.

Resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/135/5/e1355>

[gy-fact-sheets/pediculosis-head-lice-infestation/](https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html)

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/no-panic-guide-to-head-lice-treatment>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/head-lice/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20356186>

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/from-insects-animals/Pages/Signs-of-Lice.aspx>

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/epidemiology/epidemiology-fact-sheets/pediculosis-head-lice-infestation/>