

Community Management of Head Lice

Role of Parent/Guardian

- Schools and daycares bring large numbers of children into daily contact and they may serve as a focal point for the transmission of head lice. Control depends on case finding and effective treatment and prevention of spread. This requires teamwork between public health staff, school staff, parents and the community. As with other diseases, head lice management is the responsibility of the parent(s) or guardians(s) and family health care provider. The best way to detect and manage head lice is to have parents check their children's heads on a regular basis throughout the year.
- The definitive diagnosis of head lice requires the detection of a living louse. The detection of nits is not enough to conclude that the child has lice and that treatment is indicated.
- The school/daycare may ask parents to notify them if their child has head lice
- Parents may request assistance from their health care provider and/or their local public health nurse
- The child may return to school/daycare right after treatment with a recommended pediculocide.
- Public Health strongly advises that as many nits as possible be removed to make it easier to see any new infestations and avoid unnecessary treatment due to false identification.

Role of School/DayCare

- A proactive approach is recommended such as routinely providing head lice information to parents/guardians through newsletters throughout the year



- It is recommended that the school/daycare provide the family with resources, such as information sheets, links to appropriate websites, and the local public health office phone number.
- Exclusion is not recommended. It is not necessary to isolate the child if the child is remaining at school.
- A child should not miss more than one day of school because of treatment for head lice. **Children do not have to be “nit-free” in order to return to school or day care.**
- A letter may be sent to children of the classroom or area affected if more than one case has occurred within the classroom or multiple classrooms are affected.
- The Public Health Nurse may be consulted by the school/daycare on difficult cases
- The school/daycare may wish to utilize the Head Lice Management Chart to record cases and assist with problem solving strategies.

Some schools and day cares may have head lice policies that differ from Public Health recommendations. (e.g., screening of children's heads, no nit policies). Public Health will continue to provide them with support, resources and education, but at the same time maintaining our best practice guidelines and strategies.

Role of Public Health

Education:

- Public Health may provide education, support and resources to parents, schools, day cares and others.
- Inform schools/daycares/nursery schools of the following resources that may be accessed in the online WRHA Head Lice Resource Manual <http://www.wrha.mb.ca/community/publichealth/services-communicable-disease-head-lice.php>
 - Manitoba Health Pediculosis Protocol
 - The Manitoba Health Head Lice Fact
 - Sample letter to parent
 - Head Lice Management Chart

Case Management:

- Public Health Nurses may become involved in problem solving or providing consultation on difficult cases (e.g., repeated infestations despite numerous treatments, highly anxious or distraught parents); but are generally not expected to be involved in the diagnosis and treatment of routine cases
- Routine school screening by public health is not recommended.
- Where there are inequities or challenges such as purchasing a pediculocide or in carrying out the required steps, the public health nurse may problem solve with the family.

- For difficult case management, the following steps are recommended:
- Assess and confirm the presence of lice/nits. The PHN may assist the family in their screening process to ensure they have accurately identified the louse and nits
- Review management process with the family. This could be first time treatment or re-treatment based on assessment.
- Problem-solve on other inequity related issues
- Educate
- In individual circumstances, the PHN may follow-up with the family to ensure resolution

