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Protocol #52 Head Lice in School

Overview

Head lice (“lice”) do not transmit disease to humans. Lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. They are spread by direct head-to-head contact with an infested person. Spread by contact with clothing or personal belongings (e.g. hats, brushes, etc) is uncommon (CDCⁱⁱ). Public health experts agree students should not be excluded from school due to a lice infestation. Exclusion has negative social, emotional, and academic consequences. Furthermore, since an identified infestation has likely been present for 30 days or more, exclusion does not reduce spread (AAPⁱⁱⁱ).

Effective control of lice in schools is a multipronged approach including:

1. Regular screening by parent/guardian
2. Treatment of identified cases
3. Distribution of educational materials to school staff and parents/guardians (CDPHⁱ).

The role of the school in responding to a suspected case of lice is to screen the student, notify the parent/guardian, and provide information regarding appropriate treatment (CDPHⁱ). For up-to-date information on lice and treatment options, please refer to the resources cited and referenced below.

Protocol

When a case of lice is suspected the following protocol will be followed:

1. Student will be called to the office and checked by designated office staff.
2. If live lice are found, parent/guardian shall be contacted immediately by phone.
3. The student may stay in school for the remainder of the school day.
4. Absence related to head lice treatment is excused, not to exceed one consecutive day.
5. If the student has siblings at the school, the siblings should also be checked.
6. Aftercare programs have their own lice policies, and DJUSD recommends parent/guardian notify their aftercare program immediately.

When live lice are discovered or reported to the school site, the following steps will be taken:

1. Parent/guardian shall be provided educational materials about how to treat the infestation by email and/or materials sent home with the student.
2. Parent/guardian will be asked to begin treatment the same day and bring the student to the office the following morning for a recheck.
3. Designated staff will have a system in place to schedule an additional recheck 10 days later, in an effort to prevent a recurring infestation.
4. If live lice are found upon either recheck, the parent/guardian shall be contacted immediately and advised to retreat; the student may remain at school.
5. Parent/guardian will also be encouraged to consult with their primary care provider to discuss treatment options.
6. School Nurse may provide treatment suggestions and assist the parent/guardian to identify issues impacting the student’s lice infestation and school attendance.

A class notice will be sent home reminding parents/guardians to regularly check their student's head for lice. No more than one notice per month per class is necessary. At least annually, this protocol will be sent to families using district channels. Parent education may also be provided using district approved electronic or hard copy methods.

Staff involved in following this protocol will document lice check results and class notifications on the site lice log.

Screening Procedure

The student will be screened in a private area to maintain confidentiality and dignity. Designated staff will wash hands before and after screening and may use gloves. Staff may use a stick or fingers to separate hair into small sections and should examine the scalp, paying close attention behind the ears and the back of the neck for lice and nits.

Whole classroom checks are not recommended. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the California Department of Public Health, and the National Association of School Nurses agree that whole classroom checks are not effective at reducing infestations and take away from valuable instruction time.

Resources

- i. California Department of Public Health. Guidance on Head Lice Prevention and Control for School Districts and Student Care Facilities, Accessed December 2022.
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/SchoolGuidanceonHeadLice.pdf>
- ii. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Head Lice, June 15, 2023.
<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>
- iii. Head Lice. American Academy of Pediatrics Clinical Report, September 26, 2022. Accessed December 12, 2023.
<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/150/4/e2022059282/189566/Head-Lice>
- iv. National Association of School Nurses (NASN). (2020). *Head lice management in schools* (Position Statement). Accessed November 9, 2023.
<https://www.nasn.org/nasn-resources/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-head-lice>