

Administrative Procedure 6015 MR1  
*Head Lice in Schools*

A. **Procedures**

To ensure a common approach to the management of head lice in School District No. 71 (Comox Valley), the following procedures are provided:

1. To meet the needs of individual school communities, a consultative process shall be developed. The process must involve the PAC, Island Health and school staff.
  - 1.1 Discuss current process as needed with PAC and staff.
  - 1.2 Share current research and best practices.
2. Students should be examined on a regular basis for the presence of head lice. Current relevant information shall be available to the school community early in each school year.
  - 2.1 Island Health, in partnership with our schools, will offer appropriate training and tools as requested.
  - 2.2 Publish relevant information in newsletter(s), and on the School District No. 71 (Comox Valley) website.
  - 2.3 Make videos and print materials available to the school community.
3. When the school is notified of head lice, communication with other parents shall take place in a timely and sensitive manner.
  - 3.1 Written notification shall be given where and when appropriate, following the school's procedures (see sample letters #1-3).
  - 3.2 Notification shall include general information about head lice and treatment alternatives.
4. Upon notification parents may choose to temporarily withdraw their child from school for immediate treatment. However, no child will be prohibited from attending or participating at school because of head lice.
5. Treatment is to take place in a timely manner and shall include the recommended protocol as outlined by Island Health (see HealthlinkBC at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>)

6. School PACs may consider purchasing treatment products to be available for the parent community.

**B. Guidelines for Correspondence to Parents about Head Lice**

1. **Sample Letter No. 1** (attached)  
This letter will be sent to parents in September. It is general information about head lice, as well as a reminder for parents to check their children for head lice.
2. **Sample Letter No. 2** (attached)  
This letter will be sent to the student(s) you suspect might have head lice.
3. **Sample letter No. 3** (attached)  
This letter will be sent when there is a confirmed case of head lice in a particular class.
4. **Sample Letter No. 4** (attached)  
This letter will be sent when there are confirmed cases of head lice in the school (considered an outbreak when 4% of the school population is affected).

**C. Sample Correspondence to Parents**

1. **Sample Letter No. 1** (on school letterhead – *to parents in September*)  
It is general information about head lice and a reminder for parents to check their children for head lice.

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We hope you have enjoyed the summer with your children. The conclusion of school breaks are times when head lice are more likely to show up in your child's hair. To prevent the spread of head lice among children at school, we ask that you check your child's head weekly for the presence of head lice.

The wet-combing technique, as described in the attached handout, is now recognized as the best method for detecting lice and their nits.

If you detect head lice on your child, we ask that you treat for the lice immediately and notify the school.

Remember that head lice are a nuisance. They do not carry disease and are not a health risk. Early detection and appropriate treatment will significantly limit the spread of head lice. We would appreciate each family taking the time to read the information pamphlet and check their child's head regularly. Checking other members of the family is also a good idea. More information is available at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm> or from the public health nurse at (250) 331-8520.

Thank you for helping to prevent head lice from becoming a problem. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

School Principal

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2. **Sample Letter No. 2** (on school letterhead – *when you suspect a student might have head lice*)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We are concerned that your child may have head lice because:

- He/she is scratching his/her head constantly
- He/she is complaining of a very itchy head

We ask that you please:

- Read the enclosed pamphlet

If you find live lice, please follow the pamphlets instructions for treatment and notify the school so we can work together. Head lice do not carry disease, but having them can be a real nuisance. Having head lice does not mean a person is dirty – anyone with hair can get head lice. The wet-combing method is definitely the best way to detect and treat head lice (see pamphlet). By using this method and following the steps carefully, we can hopefully avoid an outbreak in the school. Many families find the treatment very time-consuming. However, it is very important, and well worth spending the time.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

School Principal

3. **Sample Letter No. 3** (on school letterhead – *when it has been reported that there is a case of head lice in a classroom*)

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents /Guardians:

There has been a case of head lice in your child's class. To prevent further spread, we request that you check your child's hair for lice several times a week for the next three weeks. Ideally, we suggest that you do the wet-combing process once a week for early detection. Should you detect an infestation, please contact the school and treat your child immediately. A handout on how to treat head lice is available from the school (also from the school district website under Policy/Regulation 6015 MR1 at the following link: <http://sd71.bc.ca/sd71/sbo/policy.php> or at <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles/hfile06.stm>).

Head lice are insects that live in human hair. Tiny and hard to see, they bite our scalps to feed, irritating the skin and making it itchy. Head lice lay eggs (nits) on hair strands close to the scalp. Nits are usually found above and behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Unlike dandruff, nits cannot be brushed off. Head lice do not carry disease, nor do they mean your child is dirty.

Anyone can be infested. Early treatment will prevent this problem from spreading. We need to work together to control this problem.

Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

School Principal

D. **Myths about Head Lice – “Sometimes I’m Misunderstood”**

**Myth 1** – *the presence of lice is a sign of poor personal hygiene.*

Fact 1 – Head lice prefer a clean scalp. It doesn’t matter your sex, age, race or how much money you have!

**Myth 2** – *only children get head lice.*

Fact 2 – Head lice like adults as much as children, but it’s easier to move from one child to another because of their close contact in daycare settings, preschools or schools.

**Myth 3** – *If your head isn’t itchy, you don’t have lice.*

Fact 3 – contrary to common thinking, head lice may be in your hair for weeks or months without making you itch. In fact, even though they are in your hair, only one-third of you will be scratching.

**Myth 4** – *long hair encourages infestation.*

Fact 4 – Head lice are more interested in your scalp than your hair, so cutting hair will not get rid of head lice, but shorter hair makes it harder for them to climb aboard.

**Myth 5** – *Lice can be “caught” from plants, pets and other animals.*

Fact 5 – Head lice can live on YOU, but they can’t live on your plants, pets or other animals.

**Myth 6** – *Lice can jump and fly from one person to another.*

Fact 6 – Head lice don’t have wings. They can’t jump, but can run quickly from one head to another wherever and whenever heads meet. Head lice may hide in hats and other headgear, scarves and accessories.

**Myth 7** – *Persistence of an itchy scalp following treatment is a sign of treatment failure.*

Fact 7 – Your scalp may be itchy for up to 10 days after successful treatment. If your head is itchy past 10 days, it may be a sign that head lice are still there or new lice have moved in!

**Myth 8** – *Head lice infestation is an infection that can cause serious disease. An outbreak of head lice is a public health emergency.*

Fact 8 – Head lice are more of a nuisance than a threat to your health. You might have heard of some of their relatives. One of them, the pubic louse or “crab” louse is found in coarse body hair. Another one, the body louse, is the only one known to carry disease. To date, head lice have not been implicated as vectors (carriers) in the spread of disease. They are often accused of causing infection, but it isn’t true. When you scratch your scalp, you help germs get under your skin.