

PROCEDURE 321	
Adopted	October, 2008
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PEDICULOSIS IN SCHOOLS

1) PURPOSE

This administrative procedure is intended to help schools, parents/guardians, and community members understand pediculosis (head lice) and its impact on students, families and school life.

The procedure describes roles and responsibilities and ways of managing, recognizing, reporting and treating Pediculosis in a manner that is sensitive, equitable, and protects the dignity and privacy of students and their families.

Hastings Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) respects the rights of all children to attend school and is committed to ensuring the provision of plans, programs, and/or services that will enable students to attend and participate in school.

2) BACKGROUND

HPEDSB recognizes that head lice, or the medical condition known as pediculosis, is not a reportable disease under the *Health Promotion and Protection Act*. It is more appropriately defined as a social nuisance, not a health problem.

Current research shows that school exclusion, early dismissal, and no nit policies do not prevent or control head lice infestations. In fact, these practices further stigmatize children, erode their self-esteem and interfere with learning. No-nit policies in schools are discouraged by the Canadian Pediatric Society. Exclusion from school may add to the burden of stress already experienced by the child and their family as inequities exist in home environments: access to financial resources, ability to take time from work or school to care for excluded children, and ability to assist their child in maintaining school work. Students identified with head lice or nits will be supported to receive treatment and will no longer be stigmatized by being excluded from school.

Coordinated efforts between home, school, and the community are necessary to control outbreaks of head lice. All support services must be administered in a manner that respects, in all circumstances, the student's rights to privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivity.

3) DEFINITIONS

Pediculosis: The state of being infested by lice.

Nits: Nits are lice eggs. They are half the size of the head of a pin and are shaped like a teardrop. They are white to grey in colour and are found close to the scalp, on the shaft of the hair.

Head Lice: Lice are tiny (3 mm long), wingless insects with flat bodies and claws that live on the scalp where they lay their eggs (nits). They cling to the hair by means of six legs. They live mostly behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. They are spread through direct head to head contact or indirectly by sharing hats, combs, hairbrushes, pillows, headphones or helmets. Head lice crawl very quickly, they do not fly or hop. One of the first signs of head lice is an itchy scalp.

Outbreak: 10 percent or more of the school population with pediculosis.

Pediculocide: A substance (e.g., shampoo) used to kill lice.

4) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

a) The Parent/Guardian

As the person with the major responsibility for the health and well-being of the child it is necessary for the parent/guardian to assume the responsibility for the identification and treatment of head lice. It is their responsibility to:

- i) be aware of the signs and symptoms of infestation;
- ii) be familiar with the technique for examining hair for lice and nits;
- iii) examine the child's head weekly for signs of infestation as part of routine hygiene or more often during an outbreak;
- iv) notify the school and others (e.g., family members, neighbours) who have come into contact with the child who has head lice;
- v) be aware of the importance of efficient treatment and environmental control measures in the home;
- vi) carry out treatment using a pediculocide, consult with a pharmacist or physician; and
- vii) review and complete Form 321-1: Notification of Suspected Head Lice.

b) The School Principal

The role of the principal is to ensure that issues around pediculosis are dealt with equitably and sensitively to avoid stigmatizing affected children. The principal:

- i) develops and communicates a school plan for carrying out the pediculosis (head lice) management plan; and
- ii) distributes head lice information to all staff and families of students at the beginning of the school year through a newsletter, website, and/or school handbook. This information may include:
 - (1) *Head Lice Giving You Trouble?* Eastern Ontario Health Unit;
<https://eohu.ca/files/resources/resource183.pdf?ebef203c0c>
 - (2) *Head Lice Infestations: A Clinical Update* - Canadian Pediatric Society
<http://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/head-lice>;
 - (3) *Caring For Kids* – Canadian Pediatric Society;
http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice;
 - (4) *Head Lice (pediculosis) Fact Sheet* – Hastings Prince Edward Public Health
<https://hpepublichealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/CD-7-Head-Lice-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
 - (5) a reminder to the parent/guardian to take responsibility to check the child's hair frequently and on an ongoing basis;
 - (6) a reminder to the parent/guardian to inform the school if the child has head lice; and/or
 - (7) a request that the parent/guardian cooperate by administering an approved treatment recommended by a pharmacist or physician when needed.
- iii) informs parents/guardians about potential screening activities that may take place throughout the school year. Initial notice is provided to parents/guardians of elementary age students through the school communication distributed each September;

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- iv) establishes guidelines for screeners/volunteers, provides training, and manages the delivery of the program;
 - v) recruits volunteers using the following criteria, and who will be required to:
 - (1) present a current Criminal Record and Vulnerable Sector background check;
 - (2) have respect and commitment to the confidentiality of student and school-related information; and
 - (3) demonstrate sensitivity and deal with the student in a way that preserves his/her dignity.
 - vi) considers suggestions for sources of volunteers, including:
 - (1) established parent/guardian volunteer groups in schools;
 - (2) parent/guardian of a child who has been affected by pediculosis;
 - (3) community volunteer groups.
 - vii) notifies the parent/guardian of the student(s) identified as having live head lice, by sending home Form 321-1: Notification of Suspected Head Lice;
 - viii) informs the parent/guardian of the recommended methods of de-infestation;
 - ix) provides families of a student(s) identified with head lice with pediculocide in cases where financial barriers may prevent treatment from occurring;
 - x) consults with the school-based social worker, social services worker, or child and youth worker, in cases where the head lice is persisting, to identify and assist in overcoming any barriers that may be preventing the parent/guardian from eradicating the head lice.
- c) The Teacher
- As a person in primary and daily contact with the students, the teacher is expected to:
- i) familiarize themselves with this procedure and educational materials pertaining to head lice provided by the principal;
 - ii) identify the risk factors for transmission and potential problem areas in the classroom and use of strategies for preventing outbreaks;
 - iii) identify the signs and symptoms of lice;
 - iv) demonstrate sensitivity, respect the affected child's right to privacy, and interact with the affected student in ways that preserves the child's dignity;
 - v) report active or suspected infestation to the principal; and
 - vi) limit activities in the classroom where heads would touch when a child has been identified as having pediculosis until he/she has been treated. It is important to handle the situation sensitively and to minimize any embarrassment to the child.
- d) The Community
- A coordinated approach by parents/guardians, volunteers, and school can decrease the spread of pediculosis. As part of community outreach, parents/guardians and volunteers should be able to:
- i) distinguish between facts and common myths regarding pediculosis;
 - ii) recognize the signs and symptoms of pediculosis;

- iii) demonstrate how to look for nits;
- iv) state effective treatments against lice;
- v) state their responsibilities in reducing the incidents of lice;
- vi) familiarize themselves with this procedure, direct parents/guardians to information provided by the principal in newsletters, school handbooks, and/or posted on the school website; and
- vii) demonstrate care to respect the dignity and feelings of students affected by head lice.

Legal references

- *Education Act*, Section 32 (1); "A person has the right... to attend school"
- *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Article 26 (1); "Everyone has the right to education..." (2) "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality"
- *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, R.S.O. (1990)

District references

- 2020-2025 Strategic Plan
- Procedure 498: Volunteers in Schools

Resources

- Canadian Pediatric Society, Head lice infestations: A clinical update. (February 2018)
- Interior Health; Recommended Head Lice Management. (January 2016)

Websites with factual information

- Hastings Prince Edward Public Health – www.hpepublichealth.ca
- Eastern Ontario Health Unit – www.eohu.ca
- Canadian Pediatric Society - Caring for Kids - www.cps.ca