

## **Why did the Sacramento City Unified School District change its Lice Management Guidelines in the 2018-2019 school year?**

The Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) recently changed its lice management guidelines. During the 2018 school year, nurses began working on this revision. You may wonder why. This paper will explain the reasons for changes and help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice.

### **Why did the District make this change?**

The SCUSD lice management guidelines were changed to reflect standard practice as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, the American School Health Association, the Harvard School of Public Health, and many other policy-making health organizations. These organizations recommend that students with eggs (nits) and/or head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL. When lice are found on a child at school, that child's parents/guardians will be informed.

### **Why would these health organizations recommend keeping a child with lice in school?**

Lice do not carry or cause disease and are not dangerous to a child. It didn't make sense that children with the common cold, which is easily passed from student to student, were allowed to stay in school, while children with lice (which are rarely transmitted to other children in school and not dangerous) were kept from attending school<sup>1</sup>. Children with head lice are NOT considered SICK.

By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had lice for three to four weeks. This means the child has been in school the entire time. SCUSD encourages parents to check their children for head lice regularly throughout the year.

### **School is NOT a high-risk area for getting lice!**

Multiple studies over several years have repeatedly proven that school RARELY is the place of lice transmission. The major mode of transmission is through head-to-head contact at sleepovers, close playing environments, and relatives. Activities such as hugging, play wrestling, and sharing a bed, all provide opportunities for lice to spread. Head lice live only on people and do not infest pets, homes, or classrooms. They are seen more often in very young children who play very closely together. Although this is quite concerning to many parents, it is important to keep a head lice infestation in perspective. Here at SCUSD, we try very hard to deal with lice cases in a matter-of-fact manner that does not make the child or family feel ashamed or singled out.

### **What WILL the school do if a case of lice is found?**

School office personnel will check students reported by other staff as possibly having lice. Scratching or a tingling sensation on the scalp can be an indication of a lice infestation. If active lice or nits are found, the parent will be notified. The school will provide information to the parents/guardians about proper treatment. Parents/guardians will NOT be informed of other children who have lice in the school, as that is a privacy concern.

Parents of children with head lice are encouraged to check all family members and talk to parents of their child's playmates. Only family members with live lice should be treated. Check your child's scalp weekly; head lice are easier to treat if caught early. Talk to your children about not sharing hair accessories, such as ponytail ties, barrettes, brushes, combs, headbands, and hats as well as not sharing pillows and towels.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-updates-treatments-for-head-lice.aspx>

## **Why did the Sacramento City Unified School District change its Lice Management Guidelines in the 2018-2019 school year?**

**Lice are very common.** Lice always exist in children and in schools. No school is ever lice-free, just as no school is free of the common cold. Before considering any kind of treatment, be sure you find a live, crawling insect. If lice are found on one family member, then everyone in the home should be checked. Pediculicide (lice) shampoos are available over-the-counter (OTC), but package directions must be followed carefully. A repeat treatment, about ten days after the first, is recommended. Some lice have become resistant to the OTC products. If lice are seen after the second treatment, parents/guardians should call the child's healthcare provider to discuss other treatments available only by prescription.

**Parents and schools are partners in the prevention and treatment of head lice and each person in the school community has a responsibility in the prevention of head lice.**

- **School:** Provide information. Education is the key to controlling head lice; therefore, the school will provide information on their website and through newsletters.
- **School Nurse:** Assessment and education. In some repeat cases, the school nurse may perform an assessment of a child with signs or symptoms of head lice, such as scratching and visible nits and/or lice. The school nurse may notify the parent if nits or lice are seen and provide education about treatment and prevention as needed.
- **Teacher:** Recognize the signs and symptoms of head lice and discreetly send the student to the office for an assessment. Maintain confidentiality. Discourage activities that cause direct head-to-head contact.
- **Parent/guardian:** Periodically check your child for head lice. Follow the labeled instructions on the lice treatment shampoo. Overuse or improper use of lice treatment products can be toxic to your child; however, when used as directed, these products are the most effective method available at this time.
- **Student:** Avoid activities that cause direct head-to-head contact. Do not share hair accessories, such as hats, combs, brushes, ponytail ties, etc. Avoid close photo shoots and/or "selfies" that can also spread head lice. Talk to your parent/guardian, office staff, or the school nurse, if your head has been exceptionally itchy. Remind your parent/guardian to check your head periodically for signs of head lice.