



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) has recently changed its lice management guidelines. In the 2018 school year nurses began working on the revision. You may wonder why. This is to explain the reason for the change and help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice.

Why did the District make a change?

The SCUSD lice management guidelines have been 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 organizations. They all recommend that students with eggs and/or head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL. When lice are found on a child at school, that child's parents will be informed. The school nurse will follow up to make sure the child is treated appropriately.

Why would these medical organizations recommend keeping a child with lice in school?

Lice do not 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, can stay in school. But children with lice, which can only rarely be given to another child in school and are in no way dangerous, were kept out of school¹. Children with head lice are not considered sick.

By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had them for three to four weeks.

This means the child has been attending school this entire time. SCUSD is encouraging 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 the past ten 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 offer opportunities for lice to spread. Head lice live only on people and do not infest pets, homes, or school. They are seen more often in very young children who play very closely together. Although this strikes fear into the hearts of many parents, it is important to keep head lice infestation in perspective. Here at SCUSD, we try very hard to deal with the few cases we have each year in a matter-of-fact manner that does not make the child feel shamed or singled out.

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



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

The school nurse will check any student reported by staff to possibly have lice. Scratching or a tingling sensation on the scalp is an indication of infestation. If active lice or nits (eggs) are found, the parent will be notified. The school nurse will provide information to the parents about proper treatment. *Parents will NOT be informed of other children who have lice in 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 products, e.g. brushes, head bands, ornaments, etc.

Lice are very common. They always exist in children and in schools. No school is ever lice free, just like no school is free of head colds. 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 should call their pediatrician to discuss other treatment available only by prescription.

Your school nurse is here to partner with you to develop a treatment plan and answer questions you might have about head lice and the care of your family.

Parents and schools as partners in the prevention and treatment of head lice.

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 web site and through newsletters. PTA will be offered the opportunity of a presentation by a school nurse about head lice during one of their monthly meetings.
- School Nurse – assessment and education. The school nurse will do an assessment of a child with symptoms of head lice, such as scratching, nits and/or lice seen on hair. The school nurse will notify the parent if nits or lice are seen and provide education about treatment and prevention as needed.
- Teacher – recognize the symptoms of head lice and discreetly send the student to the nurse for assessment. Maintain confidentiality. Discourage activities that cause direct head-to-head contact.
- Parent – periodically check your child for head lice. Follow the labeled instructions on the lice treatment shampoo. Over use or improper use of lice treatment products can be toxic to your child but are the most effective method available at this time and safe if used as directed. Contact your school nurse if you need more information or would like your child checked for head lice.



- Student – avoid activities that cause direct head-to-head contact. Do not share head items such as hats, combs, brushes, hair ties, etc... See the school nurse if your head has been itchy. Remind your parents to check your head periodically for signs of head lice.