

**Protocol**  
**For**  
**Pediculosis**

**Definition:**

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the human scalp and feed on human blood. Lice cannot hop or fly; they crawl. The adult female lays up to six eggs a night (about 100 in a lifetime) attaching them with “cement” to the base of a hair. Nits hatch in 7-10 days. The female can lay eggs about 10 days later. The life span of the louse is 30 days. Newly hatched, nymphs need human blood quickly; adults can survive a day or two off a human host. Lice do not carry any diseases. Itching is caused by sensitivity or allergic reaction to the saliva of the louse’s biting the scalp. Scratching the scalp can result in secondary skin infection and enlarged lymph nodes.

**Screening:**

1. Students may be referred by a teacher because of scratching of the scalp.
2. Classmates (who have close contact with a student) and siblings of a new case ought to be screened within 2 school days.
3. Use a disposable applicator or tongue depressor for each student. Good lighting and a magnifying glass may help.
4. With the student leaning forward, start at the back of the neck lifting the hair upward. Check around the ears and at the crown.
5. On average 5-10 lice are on one head. They move quickly when exposed to light. Nits are easier to find than the lice. Do not confuse nits with dandruff or other debris. Nits do not move. Newly laid nits are 1mm from the scalp. Egg casings remain on the hair as it grows (over an inch are likely casings of an already-hatched louse). Look for signs of irritation or secondary infection due to scratching.

**Management:**

1. Notify parent. The student may be sent home or the student may return to class with instructions. Educate the parent on the requirements of shampooing and nit removal, using verbal and written instructions.
2. Request the shampoo label or the top from the shampoo box be sent in with the student.
3. When the student returns to school, recheck the student before returning to class.

**Treatment:**

1. Nonprescription lice shampoos kill lice but not all nits. Shampoos must be used exactly as directed because some shampoos must be used on dry hair that has not been previously conditioned. Water triggers lice to close their breathing apparatus and dilutes the shampoo. Conditioners coat and protect lice and nits.
2. Recheck student in 7-10 days.
3. Confirm retreatment was done in 7-10 days.
4. Encourage parent to remove nits.
5. Students who have completed 2 complete cycles of treatment (2 shampoos each) or students who show signs that the lice are resistant to over the counter medicated shampoos, should report to a health care provider. Upon return, documentation is required.

**Education for Parents should include:**

1. Provide parents with pictures and written instructions.
2. All members of the household and close contacts; including recent sleepover friends should be checked for head lice.
3. Those with live lice or nits within 1cm of scalp should be treated.
4. Recheck child for lice and nits daily for 2 weeks.
5. For bed linens, night clothes, washable head wear, etc. wash in hot water (130°F).
6. Un-washable items should be dry cleaned or stored in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
7. Soak combs or brushes in hot water (130°F) or soak in Pediculosis shampoo.
8. Vacuum furniture and rugs.

**School Environment:**

1. Educate students regarding no head-to-head contact including sharing of hair brushes and headbands.
2. During outbreaks advise no dress-up with hats or neckwear.
3. Encourage hats placed in the sleeve of a jacket.
4. Keep coats separate by hanging each on its own hook.