

Ridgewood Public Schools
Ridgewood, New Jersey
Health Services

Pediculosis Information

Pediculosis (head lice) is a common infestation involving small parasitic insects affecting all socio – economic and age groups nationwide. Infestation may occur as a result of close contact as well as through the sharing of clothing and personal items. Activities and events such as camping, sports, travel, holidays, and recreational programs may also increase the potential for exposure.

The most common source of infestation is usually through direct personal head contact with an infested individual. Environmental items, in contact with the infested individual's head, may harbor lice and nits (eggs) such as hair accessories including: combs, brushes, headbands, scrunchies, barrettes, hats, scarves, audio equipment (headphones), helmets, backpacks, towels, bedding including pillows, clothing, upholstered furniture (sofas, car interiors, movie theatre /airline seats) , and carpeted areas.

Common symptoms of infestation are:

- **Itching** and/or persistent scratching accompanied by scalp irritation such as scratches and rash
- **Presence of ova** (eggs/nits) approximately 1 cm. from the scalp firmly attached to the individual hairs

Information regarding diagnosis, treatment, and prevention along with co-operative efforts among community, home and school is essential.

Early detection and prompt treatment of the infested individual and environment is essential in attempting to control pediculosis. School wide screenings have not shown to be effective, encouraged, or especially useful; however, screening of an individual with demonstrated symptoms (itching), upon request, or close contacts of an index case (i.e.classroom students / activity participants) may be indicated and helpful. All family members and close contacts should be examined over a period of seven to ten days.

Parents need to inspect hair and scalp throughout the year, and always when identified symptoms are present, with particular attention given to the nape of the neck, crown of the head, and above and behind the ears. Screening under a light may help to increase visibility of nits.

If there is evidence of infestation, consult with the pharmacist and physician for prompt treatment of the infested individual, and of the environment in an attempt to prevent re- infestation. Encourage the use of personal hair accessories (brushes, combs, etc.). All family members, and close contacts should be examined over a period of time (seven to ten days), or with demonstrated symptoms. Items, that have had head contact with the infested individual, including stuffed animals, should be laundered on hot water cycles, dry cleaned, or sealed in plastic bags for ten – fourteen days. Hair accessories should be treated or replaced. Vacuuming upholstered surfaces (couches, car seats) and carpeted areas where in contact with the infested individual is also recommended. Remind everyone not to share personal care items such as hair accessories, combs, brushes etc.. Have any classroom garments (art aprons) brought home for laundering. Encourage the use of labeled plastic bags replaced as necessary to hang outer garments, with hats placed into sleeves, rather than heaped.

Students should not attend school until treatment has been completed. Efforts should also be made to remove nits, as it may be difficult to distinguish viable from non- viable ova. **Notification of all close contacts including leaders of school/community activities (sports, scouts, dance, before/after school programs, childcare providers, gymnastics, drama etc) is also an important control component.**

Consult with your physician for individual health concerns
Additional information may also be accessed through the following web sites:

http://www.state.nj.us/health/cd/f_headlice.htm

http://www.aap.org/policy/0_203.html

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/default.htm>

Reviewed Medical Director:
JAM



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