

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Our Community. Our Environment.

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DATE: February 2017

TO: St. Clair County Physicians, St. Clair County Schools, Preschools, and Daycares

FROM: Annette Mercatante, MD, MPH
Medical Health Officer 

RE: **Head Lice**

Schools, pre-schools, day care centers and families continue to be challenged with head lice and may have questions relative to chronic case eradication, standardized treatment options, and established head lice policies and procedures. Most school districts in St. Clair County currently have long-established no-nit policies that may have created truancy issues for students with chronic live lice/nit infestations. It is the position of St. Clair County Health Department (SCCHD) that management of head lice should minimally disrupt the educational process, avoid ostracizing the child and protect family privacy.

Head Lice can cause intense itching as well as anxiety but does not indicate poor hygiene or low social status. Having head lice does not lead to serious medical problems and head lice (unlike body lice), never carry or spread disease.

Generally, families should be able to treat head lice independently by following the enclosed instructions. Over-the-counter lice insecticidal shampoo treatments do not guarantee to kill all lice or nits, and the oil alternative treatment (enclosed) may not suffocate every nit. Some nits, dead or alive, may remain in the hair simply because they were missed during the screening process. If repeated attempts to rid the head of lice are unsuccessful a healthcare provider should be consulted.

St. Clair County Health Department provides best practice pediculosis guidance in line with the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Based on this guidance, SCCHD makes the following recommendations for district head lice policy:

- Students with live lice and/or nits may remain in school until the end of the school day. Immediate removal of the child is unnecessary.
- Immediate treatment at home is advised. Information on treatment procedures should be sent home with the child.
- The student will be re-admitted to school after treatment and examination. If, upon examination, the school-designated personnel find **no live lice** on the child, the child may re-enter the school.
- Any student with nits farther than ¼" from the scalp should be allowed in school.
- Parents should be directed to remove nits daily and treat, according to product directions, if live lice are observed.

St. Clair County Health Department continues to

- Provide resource information for families, schools and community agencies.

Please review your school/facility lice related policies and procedures for possible revision based on SCCHD recommendations. Resources for more information have been included.

SCCHD KB:dm 11/2011, REV 02/27/17 MS.CMC
S.NSG SUPHL\2017 HEAD LICE LETTER.WORD

ST. CLAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDED HEAD LICE TREATMENTS

Pediculocidal Treatment:

Head lice infestations may be treated with “over the counter” lice killing shampoos that destroy the louse by attacking its nervous system. Most commercial lice killing shampoos (pediculocides) will kill the live bugs, but no lice killing shampoo will kill ***all*** the louse eggs (nits). Eggs must be removed by combing with a nit comb and pulling them out with fingers. Lice killing pediculocidal shampoos such as Rid or Nix should be applied and removed strictly according to package instructions.

Pediculocidal shampoos should not be used as preventive therapy on other members of the family who do not have head lice.

Alternative Treatment:

Head lice infestations may also be treated with a product that suffocates the live lice and the baby lice (nymphs) in the eggs. Common vegetable oil or a heavier weight oil such as olive oil may be used. Eggs must be removed by combing with a nit comb and pulling them out with fingers.

- Oil needs to be applied so it thoroughly coats each hair as well as the scalp. Apply the product *thickly* so it soaks the hair and scalp. **Leave the product on the hair 8-12 hours or overnight.** Protect pillows by placing a towel under the head. **Do not** apply plastic caps or wraps to the head as they could become a suffocation risk.
- After using the oil treatment, wash the hair with a grease cutting dish soap such as DAWN or JOY. Dish soap is not “tear free”. Avoid getting the soap in the eyes. Apply liquid dish soap or shampoo directly to the hair **BEFORE** wetting it with water. Work the soap through the hair then add water. It may take a second washing to remove the oil. After washing, go through the hair and look for any remaining nits, removing them by hand.
- When the hair is washed and dry, comb through with a lice comb. Comb through a section at a time, checking and cleaning the comb for lice and nits (eggs) after every stroke. Remove the lice and nits from the comb with a tissue, a toothpick or rinse the comb in hot water. Inspect the hair carefully and use your fingers to pick or slide any nits off that weren’t removed by the comb. **The inspection and removal of nits by hand cannot be emphasized enough and is in fact the most important part of the treatment.**
- This treatment should be repeated every 2-3 days for two weeks to kill any lice that have hatched from any nits missed during the initial treatment. It is very important to pick and comb all nits from the hair and inspect the hair daily for the next 14 days, followed by weekly inspections.

Endorsed by the National Pediculosis Association (NPA).