

Head Lice Fact Sheet — No. 6

Head Lice Resources

It's A Law! -- According to Texas law your child will be sent home from school if live lice are found in their hair. However, they won't be sent home, if only nits are found. The law also states that your child is allowed to return to school after one medicated shampoo or lotion treatment has been given. When your child returns to school, a head check is not required by law and there is no requirement to report cases of head lice to officials.



Listed below is the Texas Safety Code link where you can find this law. Also listed is a link to the official Texas Department of State Health Services Communicable Disease Chart For Schools and Child Care Centers which will detail the “exclusion from and re-admission to school” requirements.

Each school district can make their rules tougher if they choose. And many do. Talk to the school nurse or someone else in charge, to find out what your child's school rules are.

No Nit Policies -- The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses, to name a few, do not support a “no nit” policy in schools. A “no nit” policy is one that excludes students from school based on the presence of lice eggs whether or not live lice are present. While **DSHS does not** recommend a no nit policy, we do recognize that school districts may adopt one as a local option. DSHS does not have authority to impose a set policy regarding head lice on districts. **DSHS does**, however, urge school districts to ensure that its policy does not cause children to miss class unnecessarily or encourage the embarrassment and isolation of students who suffer from repeated head lice infestations.

Head lice infestation is a social issue not a health threat. No nit policies place a disproportionate amount of emphasis on head lice management than on real health concerns which should be a higher priority. This over-emphasis can lead to unproductive use of time by school staff and parents, missed classes, unnecessary absences, and parents missing work.

Visit the following Web sites and other resources from the Department of State Health Services and related organizations for more information about this subject and other school health issues.



WEB SITES:

- DSHS School Health Program: www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/
- DSHS Infectious Disease Control Unit: www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/lice.shtm
- DSHS Publications and Materials Department to order pamphlets/booklets and guides: <http://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/mamd/litcat/default.asp>
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Division of Parasitic Diseases: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/default.htm
- DSHS Public Health Regions – To find your public health region call: Regional Liaison Services: (512) 458-7111 ext.7297 or visit: www.dshs.state.tx.us/regions/
- Harvard School of Public Health – Head Lice Information and Frequently Asked Questions: www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html
- American Academy of Pediatrics: “No Nit” Policy News Release: www.aap.org/advocacy/archives/septlice.htm
- National Association of School Nurses: Position Statement: Pediculosis in the School Community www.nasn.org/Default.aspx?tabid=237

MATERIALS:

- Recommended Guidelines for the Management of Pediculosis in School Settings – DSHS, School Health Program (Stock #1-190) (recommended for school nurses, SHACs, principals, other administrators)
- School Health Manual – DSHS School Health Program (recommended for school nurses, nurse administrators, and principals) www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/pgtoc.shtm
- Texas Health and Safety Code: Title 2, Chapter 38 - Pediculosis of Minors: www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/hs.toc.htm
- Communicable Disease Chart For Schools and Child Care Centers: www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/health/schools_childcare/resources/ChildCareChart.pdf