

Head Lice

New Guidelines and Information

Crawford ISD has recently changed its head lice management guidelines. This is to explain the reasons for the change in guidelines and to help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice. The Texas Department of Health Services has removed head lice from its list of communicable diseases.

Why did the district make a change?

The guidelines have been changed to reflect standard practice as recommended by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, the Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, the Harvard School of Public Health, and many others. They recommend that students with eggs (nits) and/or live head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL, and not be excluded. When lice is found on a child, that child's parent will, of course, be informed. An information sheet also will be sent home.

Why would the Medical Organizations recommend this?

1. Although lice are "icky", they do not cause disease and are not dangerous. Students with lice are not sick.
2. Lice are not easily spread. Lice are spread from head- to- head contact (such as when students put their heads together taking a "selfie" picture). They move by crawling. They cannot hop or fly. They are also spread by contact with inanimate objects (such as hats, headphones, coats) or other personal items (such as brushes, combs, or towels) used by an infested person.
3. Head lice do not survive off their human host more that 24- 36 hours. In the rare instance one falls of its host, it will become very weak and not live long.
4. Most importantly, school is NOT a high risk area for getting lice. Over the past ten years, multiple studies have proven the school RARELY is the place for transmission. Head lice infest people, not school buildings or buses. It is more common to get lice from family members, overnight guests, and playmates who spend a lot of time together. Lice cause an emotional reaction. In the past 10 years MULTIPLE studies have proven keeping kids home with eggs or live lice does NOT reduce the amount of lice.

What will the school do if a case of lice is suspected or found?

The school nurse will check any student that has symptoms of head lice. If live lice are found the nurse will notify the parent and help educate the parent and child about head lice, how to prevent them, and what do now that they are present. An information sheet will also be sent home. The student will then return to class. If the student has repeated episodes, the nurse will refer them to their health care provider. Parents of children with head lice will be encouraged to talk to other parents of close classmates. Students with lice will be checked one week later to make sure all lice are gone.

Lice are very common. They always exist in children and in children in school. No school is

ever lice free, just like no school is free of head colds.

What can families can do?

1. Watch for signs and symptoms of head lice such as excessive itching or scratching of the head, especially behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
2. Check family members for head lice and nits daily. It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass. Look for greyish brown or white tiny lumps that are stuck to the hair shaft.
3. Treat the family members who have lice. You may use over the counter medications (pediculocides) that kill lice and nits. Most of these chemicals require 2 separate treatments, 7-10 days apart.
4. Use the specialized shampoos exactly as instructed to be the most effective.
5. *Removing all nits (eggs)* with a special fine-toothed comb is the most effective way to get rid of all of them. This may be a tedious job.
6. Wash possible infested articles (hats, combs, brushes, hair bows) that can be laundered at 130 degrees F and dried on the *hot* setting.
7. Articles that cannot be laundered can be kept away from people for 24- 48 hours if there is a concern of infestation. (Pillows and stuffed animals, etc., may be placed in a plastic bag for a week).
8. Vacuum floors, carpets, mattresses, and furniture.
9. Continue to check the head daily for 2- 3 weeks after treatment. Often children will 're- infect' themselves because nits that were not killed during the treatment eventually hatch. *Removing nits daily for several weeks is the most effective treatment.*
10. Help prevent lice infestation by encouraging your child not to engage in activity that causes head to head contact., such as taking "selfies."

Frequently Asked Questions (CDC website)

https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html

21 Surprising Things You Might Not Know About Head Lice

<http://www.easton.k12.ma.us/21%20Surprising%20Things%20You%20Might%20Not%20Know%20About%20Head%20Lice.pdf>

American Academy of Pediatrics article <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/AAP-Updates-Treatments-for-Head-Lice.aspx>

National Association of School Nurses "*Lice Lessons*"

<https://www.nasn.org/programs/educational-initiatives/lice-lessons>

Texas DSHS website (updated July 2017): <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/lice.shtm>