

Pediculosis Procedure

It is the position of the Madison City School System that the management of Pediculosis (infestation of head lice) should not disrupt the educational process. Head lice is not a disease and should not be associated with poor hygiene. Children found with live head lice or nits should be referred to the parents for treatment. The Alabama Department of Public Health does not require that a student with nits (eggs) be denied attendance to school. This position is supported by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Association of School Nurses.

The CDC (2010) cites the following reasons to discontinue “no nit” policies in school:

- Many nits are more than 1/4” from the scalp. Such nits are usually not viable and unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as casings.
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.
- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families, and community far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
- Misdiagnosis of nits is very common during nit checks conducted by nonmedical personnel.

The school nurse is the most knowledgeable professional in the school community and ideally suited to provide education and guidance to parents/guardians regarding “best practices” for Pediculosis management. The goal of any actions by the nurse is to contain infestation, provide appropriate health information for the treatment and prevention, prevent overexposure to potentially hazardous chemicals, and minimize school absences.

Please note the following protocol for managing Pediculosis in schools:

- The school nurse will verify by visual examination the student suspected of having Pediculosis.
- The parent will be notified of positive findings of live lice and/or nits and proper instructions will be provided on how to clean the hair, clothes, the environment and other items that may contribute to the spread of lice.
- **Students found to have live lice will be sent home, with an excused absence for the day, for appropriate treatment and return after the appropriate treatment has begun.**
- Parent must accompany student to school for the student to be rechecked by the school nurse for readmission. Through visual examination the school nurse will make a determination as to whether a student can return to class.
- Although students can return to school with nits, the ultimate goal is for the parents to work toward removing all of the nits.
- Over the next 7 days after the student has begun treatment, the nurse may periodically monitor the student’s hair for live lice and for the elimination of the nits.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to follow procedure and return their child to school promptly.