



North Mason School District

71 E. Campus Drive, Belfair, WA 98528
(360) 277-2300; (360) 277-2320 FAX

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

Lice can be a problem in classrooms during any time of the year. As the school year continues, it's important to review some key facts about lice in the school setting. The following recommendations are adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as the Office of Superintendent and Public Instruction's (OSPI) Infection Control Guide.

Transmission

Lice are mainly transmitted by head to head contact in the community, at home, and at school. Indirect contact, from jackets, combs, and hats, are less likely to transmit but may occur rarely. Lice found off the body are likely to be injured or dead. If your child has lice, it does not mean they are dirty; in fact healthy lice prefer clean scalps and are not likely to leave the head unless there is a heavy infestation. Transmitting lice from bedding and carpet is very low, but each classroom is cleaned and vacuumed at the end of the day to reduce transmission, regardless of whether lice are in a classroom.

Diagnosis

It can be difficult to properly diagnose lice and should only be done by a medical professional. Live lice avoid light and can crawl quickly. Unhatched lice eggs (nits) can sometimes be confused with dead or empty egg cases on the hair shaft. Nits are difficult to remove because they are firmly attached to the hair shaft, and therefore unlikely to spread with head to head contact. Nits more than 1cm (about ¼ in) from the scalp are most likely dead or dying. Lice do not carry or spread disease.

Treatment

Do not initiate treatment unless there is a clear diagnosis. Talk to a doctor or pharmacist before initiating any treatment. There are misconceptions about lice treatments and also lice resistance to certain treatments, especially over the counter products. It's important to consult with a health care provider to find out what is the best treatment, as well as when treatment should be repeated. Adult lice can live for up to one month on the scalp and nits normally hatch in 7-12 days.



North Mason School District

71 E. Campus Drive, Belfair, WA 98528
(360) 277-2300; (360) 277-2320 FAX

Home remedies such as tea tree oil, butter, mayonnaise, and olive oil do not have strong evidence to support effectiveness. While combing may make the hair shaft look cleaner, it may only result in the removal of already dead lice or empty nit cases.

Prevention

The best way to prevent lice infestations is to teach your child to avoid head-to-head contact. Children at this age are frequently affectionate and caring with their friends, which is shown with hugging, sharing items, and standing close to each other. Staff members are reminded throughout the year to reinforce teaching prevention practices to students. Students should also be taught to avoid sharing personal items. While it is not possible to prevent all head lice infestations in the school setting, the staff are committed to reduce the transmission of lice in the district. Confidentiality about lice cases should be maintained by each staff member and volunteer, including classroom helpers.

Per the Academy of Pediatrics and OSPI, immediate or long-term exclusion is no longer recommended. Students with live lice can remain in class and go home at the end of the day. However, the office will call you if your child has lice so you can make the decision to take them home and begin treatment. Students may return the next day after an initial treatment has been started.

As your child's school nurse, I want to let you know I am here as a resource to your family. Often times, I am not notified by parents of a lice infestation until it is out of control. You may feel embarrassed your child has lice, but do not be as this is a common occurrence in childhood. Please let me know if I can be of any assistance to your child and family. If you would like me to check your child for lice before or after treatment, let me know and I will check your child when I am at his or her school.

If you have any questions, please contact me at the number below.

Sincerely,

Catherine Shutty BSN, RN

District Nurse for NMSD

360-277-2328