



**School District No. 85
(Vancouver Island North)**

"Bringing Learning to Life"

**INFORMATION
AND
EDUCATION PACKAGE**

to support

**School District 85 (Vancouver Island North)
Policy 5-50 - Control of Head Lice**

This Education Package is based on information provided by the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

It is meant to be a useful tool for schools in planning their approach to lice issues and concerns. It is based on key elements of the head lice policy and emphasizes parental responsibility, schools taking a major role in educating school staff, children and parents and promotes head lice detection and treatment based on current research.

LICE MANAGEMENT TIMELINE

A “suggested approach” and a “minimal approach” to lice management in schools are recommended, recognizing that schools have different volunteer bases.

SUGGESTED APPROACH:

September:

1. Student Handbooks sent home with information about lice management
2. Principals call meeting with teachers and/or PAC to create a lice management committee or plan
3. Lice management committee (suggest it be comprised of principal, a teacher and parent volunteers) meets to decide on their lice management goals (education is number one) and implementation strategies. See attached suggested goals.
4. Printed information on lice management is sent out to all families.

October:

5. 20-minute presentation by committee at teachers’ meeting. *“Bug Busting”* video viewed
6. 20-minute presentation, including the *“Bug Busting”* video, by committee volunteer or teacher to each class, Grades K-7
7. Evening meeting for parents. *“Bug Busting”* video viewed

February:

8. Reinforce student education strategies
9. Reinforce parent education strategies

May:

10. Revise lice management information with updates for next year’s student handbook.

June:

11. Evaluation of strategies

MINIMAL APPROACH:

1. Follow Suggested Approach strategies: 1, 4, 5, 6, 8 & 10
2. If there is no parent involvement to form a lice management committee, then the principal can form a plan with those staff that will need to be aware of all the printed materials and resources.

SUGGESTED GOALS IN SUPPORT OF A LICE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

- Educate teachers, students and families
- Provide support for families that experience persistent infestation of head lice
- Provide regular information – newsletters, information boards, staff room boards
- Increase awareness of facts / decrease belief in myths
- **De-stigmatize** the occurrence of head lice
- Have a long-range education program in place

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

HEAD LICE

This is the time of year when head lice may show up in your child's hair. To prevent the spread of head lice among children at our school, we ask that you check your child's head weekly for the presence of head lice.

The wet combing technique, as described in the attached handout, is now recognized as the best method of detecting lice and their nits.

If you detect head lice on your child, we ask that you notify the school, and treat immediately. Avoid using head lice shampoos. They may no longer be effective in killing all lice and their nits, and may cause skin irritation. As described in the handout, inexpensive conditioner and special lice combs, used as directed, will eliminate lice from your child's head. Hair conditioner and lice combs are available at most drug stores. Special "**Bug Busting**" lice combs are available from the Public Health Office in your area at cost.

Early detection and appropriate treatment will significantly limit the spread of head lice in our school.

We would appreciate each family taking the time to read the information pamphlet and check their child's head regularly. Checking other members of the family is also a good idea.

More information is available from the Public Health Nurse in your community or by calling the public health nurse in Port Hardy at 250-949-3100.

Thank you for helping to prevent head lice from becoming a problem. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Principal

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date: _____

Dear Parents/Guardians:

A Head-Lice Team member/school staff is concerned that your child may have lice because:

- He/she is scratching his/her head constantly
- He/she is complaining of a very itchy head
- Live head lice have been seen on his/her head
- Nits have been noticed close to his/her scalp

Please:

- Read the enclosed pamphlet
- Carefully follow the pamphlet's instructions of checking for head lice when the hair is soaked with conditioner
- If you find live lice, please follow the pamphlet's instructions for "Treatment"

Remember, having head lice does not mean a person is dirty – anyone with hair can get head lice. The wet combing method is definitely the best way to detect and treat head lice (see pamphlet). By using this method and following the steps carefully we can hopefully avoid further outbreaks in the school. Many families find the treatment very time consuming. It is, however, very important that you spend the time treating your child.

Please sign and return the bottom portion of this letter to your child's teacher. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely

Please check one:

- Yes, I have found live lice No, I did not find any live lice
- Yes, the first combing has been completed and combings will be carried out every 3-4 days for the next 2-3 weeks, accordingly to the instructions given in the school handout.
- Yes, I would like some assistance with the treatment/combing process.

Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

Student Name: _____ Class: _____

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date: _____

Dear Parents/Guardians:

There has been a case of head lice in your child's class. To prevent further spread, we request that you check your child's hair for the presence of lice every two to three days for the next two weeks. We also suggest that you do the wet combing process once a week as an early detection process. Should you detect an infestation, please contact the school and treat your child immediately. A handout on how to treat this problem is available from the school.

Head lice are insects that live in human hair. Tiny and hard to see, they bite our scalps to feed, irritating the skin and making it itchy. Lice lay eggs (nits) on hair strands close to the scalp. Nits are usually found above and behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Unlike dandruff, nits cannot be brushed off. Head lice do not mean that your child is dirty. Anyone can be infested. Early treatment will prevent this problem from spreading.

We need to work together to control this problem. Your cooperation is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

MYTHS ABOUT HEAD LICE

[excerpt taken from the Vancouver Island Health Authority information]

“Sometimes I’m Misunderstood”

Myth 1 The presence of lice is a sign of poor personal hygiene.

Fact: We head lice prefer a clean scalp. It doesn’t matter to us your sex, age, race or how much money you have!

Myth 2 Only children get head lice.

Fact: We like adults as much as children, but it’s easier to move from one child to another because of their close contact in daycares, preschools or schools.

Myth 3 If your head isn’t itchy, you don’t have lice.

Fact: Contrary to common thinking, we may be in your hair for weeks or months without making you itch. In fact, even though we are in your hair, only one-third of you will be scratching.

Myth 4 Long hair encourages infestation.

Fact: We are more interested in your scalp than your hair so cutting hair will not get rid of us.

Myth 5 Lice can be “caught” from plants, pets and other animals.

Fact: I can live on YOU, but I can’t live on your plants, pets or other animals.

Myth 6 Lice can jump and fly from one person to another.

Fact: We don’t have wings. We can’t jump, but we can run quickly from one head to another *wherever and whenever heads meet*. We may hide in hats and other headgear, scarves and accessories.

Myth 7 Persistence of an itchy scalp following treatment is a sign of treatment failure.

Fact: Yours scalp may be itchy for up to 10 days after successful treatment. If your head is itchy past 10 days, it may be a sign that I am still there or my friends have moved in!

Myth 8 Head lice infestation is an infection that can cause serious disease. An outbreak of head lice is a public health emergency.

Fact: I am more of a nuisance than a threat to your health. You might have heard of some of my relatives. One of them, the pubic louse or “crab” louse is found in coarse body hair. Another one, the body louse, is the only one of us known to carry disease. To date, head lice have not been implemented as vectors (carriers) in the spread of disease. I’m often accused of causing infection, but it isn’t me, it is germs. When you scratch your scalp, you help germs get under your skin.

ISSUES REGARDING DRY HEAD CHECKS

The “Dry Head Check” method of detecting head lice on children in schools is a practice with long history. At one time, public health nurses did the checks on a regular basis, and then with cutbacks, they began to train a parent volunteer team in each school to be “Head Lice Checkers”. At present, a number of schools in our school district continue to do dry head checks.

Some of the issues related to this are:

1. Manpower (or people power) and time needed to regularly check every child in every class.
2. Dry head checks are not an accurate way of detecting head lice (see Harvard School of Public Health) and often result in misdiagnosis.

Too often children are treated for head lice when they do not have an active infestation. A basic rule is that an accurate diagnosis is essential before any treatment. Current research says that a diagnosis of active infestation can be made only if living lice are present. Dry head checks can detect living lice if the child has a heavy infestation, but the Harvard School of Public Health says most people only host a few (about 10 lice at any one time) and they scurry away when hair is parted and can be missed. A diagnosis of head lice, based on what appears to be living nits or eggs, is not definitive. The Harvard School of Public Health says that very often hair casts, grit or dandruff that are mistaken for nits, and only with a microscope can one tell if an actual nit is, in fact, viable. Current research indicates wet combing is an accurate method to detect head lice and used properly, can successfully treat head lice.

For these reasons, schools are urged to place their energy into educating parents, students and school staff about the detection and treatment of head lice using the Vancouver Island Health Authority’s method and not to focus exclusively on conducting dry head checks.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH PERSISTENT INFESTATIONS

Providing support to help families deal effectively with persistent infestations is often a challenge.

Suggested Approaches:

- Provision of the general education strategies for all parents and children is a starting point.
- Some schools have parent volunteers who offer to help parents do the wet combing as treatment.
- It may be helpful to have a meeting with school staff (teacher, counselor) and if possible the parent, to do some creative problem solving.
- If all attempts to involve the parent fail, one approach, if it's an older student (i.e. Grade 7) is to teach the student at school to do the wet combing.

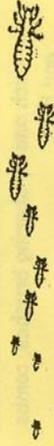
If it is a volunteer who does the wet combing on the student, the parent's permission is required.

Vancouver Island North Health Authority (VIHA) Information Pamphlet



Wet Combing

How To Get Rid of Head Lice



Wet combing Steps to Check for Lice:

1. Wash hair with low priced shampoo.
2. Rinse hair.
3. Put enough conditioner on hair to cover whole scalp, usually about 2 handfuls.
4. Use the wide-toothed comb to get knots out of hair.
5. Begin combing the head carefully with the bug busting lice comb. While you are combing over the head, do not lift the teeth of the comb away from the scalp.
6. Checking can be done with the head forward over the sink combing from the back of the head to the front, or from a sitting position going from the front of the head to the back.
7. Pull the comb through the hair in one stroke. If the comb tugs add more conditioner.
8. After each stroke, wipe the comb on a paper towel and look the lice.
9. Make sure to comb the entire head, checking for lice after each stroke.
10. If you find any lice, move onto the treatment process.

For more information or loan of a video contact 949-3100

Web site: www.chc.org/bugbusting

Treatment If You Find Lice:

If you find head lice, you will need to do more combing using these steps.

1. With the conditions still on the hair, keep the teeth of the lice comb next to the scalp and carefully pull the comb through the entire length of the hair.
2. Comb the whole head section by section
3. After each stroke rinse the comb in a bucket, bowl, or sink full of warm water. Check the comb for lice before you pull it through the hair again to make sure you do not put lice back onto the head.
4. Keep combing until you find no more lice.
5. Rinse the hair to remove conditioner.
6. Leave the hair soaking wet.
7. Untangle the hair with a wide-tooth comb to take out the knots.
8. Comb the whole head again with a lice comb rinsing the comb after each stroke to make sure there are no more lice.
9. Keep repeating the steps every 4 days for a full 2 weeks to make sure that new lice are removed as the nits or eggs hatch.
10. Use the steps to check for head lice on everyone living in your household.

VIHA North

Child, Youth & Family Services

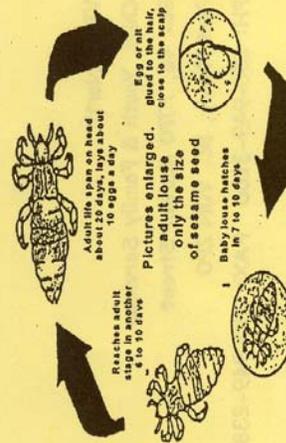
Box 46, 7070 Market Street

Port Hardy, BC VON 2P0

PH: 250-949-3100 FAX: 250-949-2388

Head Lice Fact:

- Lice are tiny insects about the size of a sesame seed.
- Anyone with hair can get head lice.
- Lice do not have wings and cannot fly or jump.
- Lice move quickly in dry hair and this makes them hard to see.
- Once lice leave the head they can only live for a few hours.
- Having head lice does not always make the scalp itchy.
- Lice move to other heads when heads touch and by sharing brushes, combs, and hats.
- Lice are common where children play or work closely together.



Life Cycle of Head Lice

More Head Lice Facts:

- Adult lice lay about 10 eggs each day.
- The lice eggs are called nits and they are glued to hair near the scalp.
- It takes about 7 to 10 days for the lice eggs to hatch.
- Once a lice egg has hatched the empty eggshell remains stuck to the hair, but there are no more lice in the eggshells.
- If you find an eggshell more than 1/2 inch away from scalp it is most likely empty.
- The eggshells look like dandruff, but cannot be brushed or blown away.

When to Check for Lice:

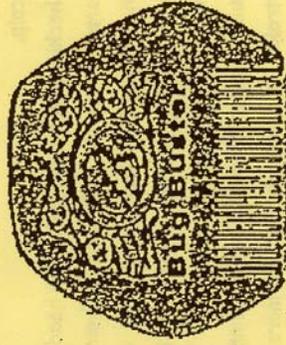
- Once a week after shampooing.
- When a person is scratching his or her head more than usual.
- When you receive a note home from your school or day-care about lice.
- If your child's playmates have head lice.
- When School Vacations end.

How to Check for Lice:

- Lice move quickly in dry hair and this makes them hard to see. It is important to use **WET COMBING** to check for lice.
- Using conditioner on the hair when checking for lice keeps the lice from moving so that you can see them when you comb them out.

What You Need to Check for Lice:

- Shampoo and conditioner—low priced.
- White colored conditioner—low priced.
- Wide-tooth comb to untangle hair.
- Towels and paper towels.
- Lice comb—we recommend a comb called a "Bug Busting" comb. It has very fine teeth that make it easier to remove lice. See your local health unit for combs. Cost \$2.00



"Bug Busting" Comb

If You Find Lice:

- Clean combs and hair brushes in hot soapy water.
- Clean the combs, towels, and other supplies that you used for checking for lice in hot soapy water.
- You **DO NOT** need to spend time cleaning the house.

Local Resources

1. **Vancouver Island Health Authority** – 250-949-3100
 - the Port Hardy Office - has a copy of the “*Bug Busting*” video – can be lent to parents
 - Combs can be purchased at cost from your community’s local public health office

2. **School District No. 85 (Vancouver Island North)**
 - **All schools** - have a copy of the “*Bug Busting*” video to lend parents
 - **All schools or P.A.Cs.-** should have a supply of combs for sale
 - **Resource Centre** – 250-949-6618, Ext. 2244 - Has copies of the “*Bug Busting*” video to lend

3. “*Bug Busting*” kits, combs and video can be purchased direct from
Community Hygiene in England
E-mail address: bugbusters2kyahoo.co.uk
Website address: http://www.chc.org/products_dvd.cfm