

FAQs ABOUT LPS HEAD LICE GUIDELINES
Health Services Department
Lincoln Public Schools

LPS Guidelines, May 2013/Created by a Community Task Force utilizing most recent research and evidenced based practice:

- **When live lice are found on a student, the family is notified and the student may go home at the end of the day. Parents/guardians have the option of picking their child up earlier to begin treatment.**
- **The student's head is checked upon return to school. If no live lice, the student is also checked again in 7-10 days.**
- **Three repeat cases of live lice at school may lead to exclusion from school until lice free.**
- **Families are encouraged to report head lice to the school health office. The school nurses are available to answer questions regarding treatment.**

Q: **My child has had head lice three times this year. It is incredibly expensive to treat my whole family and my home. Why doesn't the school do anything about it?**

A: We appreciate notification of any reports of head lice. The school will check your child and siblings heads at your request. Medicated shampoos must be used properly and strictly following the instructions on the label is essential. Treating a family member that does not have lice is not recommended. Over treating a child's head for head lice can be harmful to their scalp and hair. Classroom teachers are notified to send any students to the health office that display any signs of possible head lice such as head scratching and visible lice or nits to have their heads checked. Parents/guardians whose child is found to have live lice or nits are notified and always have the option of picking up their child immediately to begin treatment (and choose to do so 66% of the time). Each school tracks the incidence of head lice. The focus of treatment needs to be the child's head. Extensive cleaning is no longer recommended. Lice need a human host to survive. Lice can live less than one day at room temperature. Eggs cannot hatch without being close to the scalp. Cleaning of items that have come in contact with the head of the infested person in the previous 24-48 hours is recommended (such as a pillow case).

Q: **How common are head lice?**

A: There were 491 cases of live lice found at Lincoln Public Schools during the 2013-2014 school year, with 196 being repeat cases. Out of 38,000 students, less than 295 students had lice at school. During the previous school year, 340 students had live lice at school.

Q: **My child was fine when they left for school this morning, but they came home with head lice. It has to be coming from school, because my child doesn't go anywhere else. Why doesn't LPS check the school for lice routinely?**

A: Lice are transmitted from head to head contact. Children cannot get head lice sitting in a classroom or walking down the hall. Upon review of classrooms checked for head lice last year, it was determined that 99% of those students had no other evidence of live lice or nits. Two schools checked an entire grade and found no other evidence of live lice or nits. The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend classroom or whole school checks. The transmission rate of head lice in school is very rare. Exclusion from school due to live lice or nits would result in children unnecessarily missing school. There is no evidence of classroom or whole school screenings for lice as being effective in reducing the amount of head lice in a school community.

Q: **Occasionally the following reports are called in to the district office: "It is a known fact that head lice is rampant at _____ school". Why aren't parents notified every time there is a case of lice found in a school?**

A: Rumors and social media misinformation often contribute to eliciting fear in parents. Please know: Lincoln Public Schools has not had a lice outbreak of epidemic proportions since 1988, when the first guidelines were written by a community task force that included representatives from the health department, school nurses, social workers, administrators and entomology experts. A similar community task force worked again early in 2013 to review the most recent research, recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Association of School Nurses. At that time new LPS guidelines, "Crawling Towards the Truth: Facts about Head Lice" and an "Informational Sheet for Families" were developed.

Parents are not routinely notified of a case of live lice at school to protect the student's privacy. It is recommended that parents check their children's head routinely, not just when a case is identified in a school. School nurses, social workers and administrators work with families providing education, help identify barriers in accessing care and guidance in successfully treating a child's head. It is essential to maintain confidentiality for these students and their families.