

Community Management of Head Lice

Role of Parent/Guardian

- Because schools bring large numbers of children into daily contact, they may serve as a focal point for the transmission of head lice. Control depends on case finding and effective treatment and prevention of spread. This requires teamwork between public health staff, school staff, parents and the community. As with other diseases, head lice management is the responsibility of the parent, not the school or other agency. The best way to detect and manage head lice is to have parents check their children's heads on a regular basis throughout the year.
- Parents may request assistance in these matters from their local public health office or physician.
- At the beginning of each school year, parents will be asked to notify the school if their child has head lice.
- The school/daycare may notify their public health nurse if further follow-up/support and education should be provided to the family. The school may also provide the family with other resources, such as information sheets, links to appropriate websites, and the PHN's phone number.
- The school is then encouraged to distribute a notification letter to the children of the classroom or area affected.
- The parent is then advised that the child may return to school/daycare after treatment with a recommended pediculocide.
- Public Health strongly advises that as many nits as possible be removed to make it easier to see any new infestations and avoid unnecessary treatment due to false identification.



Role of School / Day Care

- The school or day care is advised to notify the parents or caregiver:
 - by phone call
 - by letter if unable to contact the parents or caregiver.
- Parents should receive information about head lice resources (e.g., website, pamphlets).
- Exclusion is not recommended. It is not necessary to isolate the child if the child is remaining at school.
- The PHN may be consulted by the school/daycare/nursery school.
- A letter is sent to children of the classroom or area affected.
- A school may wish to utilize the *Head Lice Management Chart* to record cases and assist with problem solving strategies.

Role of Public Health

Education:

- Recommend informing schools/daycares/nursery schools where the following resources may be accessed:
 - Manitoba Health Pediculosis Protocol: www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cdc/protocol/pediculosis.pdf
 - *The Facts of Lice* information sheet: www.wrha.mb.ca/healthinfo/a-z/files/HeadLice_Info.pdf
 - Sample letter to parent: this and other resources will be included in the Head Lice Resource Manual
- Classroom education
- Parent information sessions

Case Management

- Public Health may provide education, support and resources to parents, schools, day cares and others. Nurses become involved in problem solving or providing consultation on difficult cases (e.g., repeated infestations despite numerous treatments, highly anxious or distraught parents).
- Routine school screening by public health is not recommended.
- The school should advise parents at the beginning of each year that head lice are common in school and that they have an important role in early detection and management.
- Where there are difficulties in buying a pediculocide or in carrying out the required steps, the public health nurse may problem solve with the family.
- A child should not miss more than one day of school because of treatment for head lice. **Children do not have to be "nit-free" in order to return to school or day care.**
- Communication with parents is extremely important in limiting the negative public response to head lice. This includes information about the control measures in specific situations.

Schools/Day Cares Partnership

Some schools and day cares may have head lice policies that differ from Public Health recommendations. (e.g., screening of children's heads, no nit policies). Public Health will continue to provide them with support, resources and education, but at the same time maintaining our best practice guidelines and strategies.

Difficult Cases Management

For difficult case management, the following steps are recommended, utilizing the **Head Lice Management Chart**.

- Confirm/assess the presence of lice/nits
- Evaluate parental management and product use
- Assess the likelihood that reinfestation has occurred
- Recommend re-treatment based on assessment
- Problem-solve the issues
- Educate

Recurrent head lice within 2 weeks of first contact

- Public Health may follow-up with a phone call to parent/guardian to review treatment process and management. Revisit possible contacts and recommend re-treatment.
 - Determine family's ability to purchase pediculocide and assess resources available to treat the family
- If lice persist after two weeks, Public Health can offer to conduct a home visit to review the fact sheet and check list.
 - Review management process with the family
 - Ascertain if this is treatment failure
 - The PHN may assist the family in their screening process to insure they have accurately identified the louse and nits
- In individual circumstances, dependent on the frequency of occurrences, the PHN may decide to follow-up with the family to insure that treatment and extensive nit removal has occurred and that the process has been effective.

Outbreak Management

- Utilizing the worksheet *Head Lice Management Chart*, the Public Health Nurse, and other partners can determine whether there is an outbreak (e.g., > 10%). The Communicable Disease Coordinator, Medical Officer of Health, and Team Managers may provide assistance with problem solving. The decision to screen classrooms, organize educational sessions, and/or contact individual parents is the responsibility of each community area.



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