

Message for staff



Everett Public Schools

Sept. 27, 2010

For more information:

Jim McNally, 425-385-4021

Head lice in the news creates confusion

There is no change of policy or procedure as to how district responds

Head lice in the news

There is no change in the school district policy or procedure regarding how school staff respond to cases of head lice. However, Procedure 3414, Contagious Diseases, addresses how schools deal with student exclusion, which has been a current topic of conversation.

[Procedure 3414](#), [Contagious Diseases](#), addresses how schools deal with student exclusion:

- A. The length of absence from school for a student ill from a contagious disease is determined by the directions given in the Infections Disease Control Guide or instructions provided by the attending physician, or **instructions from the local health officer**.
- B. The principal has the final responsibility for enforcing all exclusions.
- C. When the principal suspects a nuisance disease such as pediculosis (lice), the principal **may** institute screening procedure to determine if, in fact, the disease exists, he/she **may** exclude the student from school until successfully treated.
- D. Follow-up of suspected communicable disease cases should be carried out in order to determine any action necessary to prevent the spread of the disease to additional children.

[In an email to all Snohomish County superintendents](#) on Aug. 16, 2010, Snohomish County Health Officer and Director, Gary Goldbaum, M.D. wrote, "no child should be excluded from school due to head lice."

Parents can be assured that the district will continue responding to head lice and nits as quickly, responsibly and sensitively as we have in the past. We will:

- Call a parent immediately if/when we discover that a student in that family has head lice/nits.
- Inform all parents of students in a classroom that has a student with a confirmed case of head lice/nits. Each family will receive a letter that informs them of the case, but does not include any students' names.
- Provide resources and guidance to parents about how best to treat head lice/nits.
- Conduct head checks of students in the classroom with an incidence of head lice/nits.
- Check the condition of the child with head lice/nits after treatment.

As per the Snohomish Health District guidance, we will not automatically "require" that every student be excluded from school, although that will be an option for families to choose, and it may be a requirement in some cases. Our health staff and administrators will continue to work with families, as they have in the past to connect with appropriate health care and to manage health cases in our schools and follow the new guidelines of Snohomish Health District.

Research behind current conversations about head lice

- In 2004, the National Association of School Nurses took the position that, "... the management of pediculosis should not disrupt the education process. Children found with live head lice should be referred to parents for treatment. Data does not support school exclusion for nits. Because no disease process is associated with head lice, schools are not advised to exclude students when nits remain after appropriate lice treatment, although further monitoring for signs of reinfestation is appropriate."
- In 2007, a Harvard School of Public Health statement reads "The discovery of lice or their eggs on the hair should not cause the child to be sent home or isolated. Furthermore, treatment is not indicated if the infestation is not active."
- In August 2010, a report of the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics states, "A child should not be restricted from school attendance because of lice, because head lice have low contagion within classrooms."

More information about prevention and treatment

Centers for Disease Control podcast [Talk about Nitpicking](#)