

MEMORANDUM

February 8, 2024

Information - ANNUAL



Office of the School System Medical Officer
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

TO: All Principals

FROM: Patricia Kapunan, MD MPH

SUBJECT: *Fiscal Year 2023–2024 Pediculosis (HEAD LICE)—Updated Policy*

Summary

The Office of the School System Medical Officer is sharing updated guidance about head lice.

Background

Updated head lice guidance for schools enacted by the Maryland Department of Health in August 2023 reflects the latest recommended practices by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (Control Measures in Schools), and the National Association of School Nurses. The main changes relate to school exclusion and “no-nit” policies. Students identified with a lice infestation can stay in school until the end of the school day, and return to school after their first treatment. The rationale behind these [changes](#) are listed below.

- Nits more than ¼ inch from the scalp are typically not viable and very unlikely to hatch to become crawling lice, or may in fact be empty shells, also known as “casings.”
- Nits are cemented to hair shafts and are very unlikely to be transferred successfully to other people.
- The burden of unnecessary absenteeism to the students, families, and communities far outweighs the risks associated with head lice.
- By the time an infestation causes itching and is detected, the individual may have had the infestation for 4-6 weeks. Due to the duration of infestation and transmission risk, which is lower than commonly perceived, allowing a student to remain until the end of the school day minimizes stigma, protects privacy, and minimizes undue burden to families.

Families may voluntarily pick their student up early to provide treatment. School teams may exercise discretion in recommending urgent evaluation and treatment for students with severe infestations or symptoms interfering with learning. Students with chronic or recurrent infestations may need prescription treatment or evaluation by a health care provider, or other supports to follow through with treatment and prevention.

Required Action

- Review the updated [Pediculosis \(Head Lice\) Procedures](#)
- The [Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Pediculosis \(Head Lice\) Updated Policy](#) Google folder also includes letter templates and educational handouts.

If you have any questions related to unique situations or require further clarification regarding this policy, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of the School System Medical Officer at SSMO@mcpsmd.org.

Approved by:


Dr. Betty J. Collins, Acting Deputy Superintendent

2/5/2024

Date