

Why did the Sacramento City Unified School District change its Lice Management Guidelines in the 2018-2019 school year?

The Sacramento City Unified School District (SCUSD) recently changed its lice management guidelines. During the 2018 school year, nurses began working on this revision. You may wonder why. This paper will explain the reasons for changes and help you understand why this does NOT put your child at more risk for getting head lice.

Why did the District make this change?

The SCUSD lice management guidelines were changed to reflect standard practice as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of School Nurses, the American School Health Association, the Harvard School of Public Health, and many other policy-making health organizations. These organizations recommend that students with eggs (nits) and/or head lice REMAIN IN SCHOOL. When lice are found on a child at school, that child's parents/guardians will be informed.

Why would these health organizations recommend keeping a child with lice in school?

Lice do not carry or cause disease and are not dangerous to a child. It didn't make sense that children with the common cold, which is easily passed from student to student, were allowed to stay in school, while children with lice (which are rarely transmitted to other children in school and not dangerous) were kept from attending school¹. Children with head lice are NOT considered SICK.

By the time lice are discovered, the child has usually had lice for three to four weeks. This means the child has been in school the entire time. SCUSD encourages parents to check their children for head lice regularly throughout the year.

School is NOT a high-risk area for getting lice!

Multiple studies over several years have repeatedly proven that school RARELY is the place of lice transmission. The major mode of transmission is through head-to-head contact at sleepovers, close playing environments, and relatives. Activities such as hugging, play wrestling, and sharing a bed, all provide opportunities for lice to spread. Head lice live only on people and do not infest pets, homes, or classrooms. They are seen more often in very young children who play very closely together. Although this is quite concerning to many parents, it is important to keep a head lice infestation in perspective. Here at SCUSD, we try very hard to deal with lice cases in a matter-of-fact manner that does not make the child or family feel ashamed or singled out.

What WILL the school do if a case of lice is found?

School office personnel will check students reported by other staff as possibly having lice. Scratching or a tingling sensation on the scalp can be a sign of lice infestation. If you notice these signs, please contact your child's teacher or the school office.

¹<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/pages/aap-updates-treatments-for-head-lice.aspx>

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Lice are very common. Lice always exist in children and in schools. No school is ever lice-free, just as no school is free of the common cold. Before considering any kind of treatment, be sure you find a live, crawling insect. If lice are found on one family member, then everyone in the home should be checked. Pediculicide (lice) shampoos are available over-the-counter (OTC), but package directions must be followed carefully. A repeat treatment, about ten days after the first, is recommended. Some lice have become resistant to the OTC products. If lice are seen after the second treatment, parents/guardians should call the child's healthcare provider to discuss other treatments available only by prescription.

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