

Conroe ISD Health Services

Head Lice FAQ'S

1. *Why don't schools send letters when there is a student in my student's class with head lice?*
 - Sending letters home elevates the condition to a “communicable disease” which it is not.
 - Sending out letters each time there is a case of head lice also heightens the anxiety and distress that parents feel around the issue. It also give the impression that head lice originates in schools (which research has shown it does not, it is in the community and all around us).

2. *Why don't the school nurses do classroom checks when you know a student has head lice?*
 - “Current evidence does not support the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of classroom or school-wide screening for decreasing the incidence of head lice among children” (per CDC, May 2007)
 - Head lice is not a reportable communicable disease, it is considered a “pest”. It is not reasonable or “good” use of district resources for School Nurses to be involved in activities that are not supported by current medical or scientific research such as lice screening.
 - The School Nurse's main role in the schools is to manage health service for medically impacted students-especially those with life threatening conditions, to support student health assessments-many times leading to Special Education evaluations and ongoing support, manage overall health and safety of the school community, comply with immunization laws and surveillance, provide health education as possible and attend to immediate issues as they arise.

3. *Why doesn't the district recognize what a problem head lice is for families?*
 - We do recognize head lice is an inconvenience and bother. Eradication is very time consuming and can be costly however head lice is not a communicable disease, it is not reportable and it is officially considered a “pest”.
 - Head lice is not considered “dangerous”. Contrary to popular belief, they are rarely transmitted in the typical school setting.
 - Our advice to parents is to check your child every week, as well as before and after slumber parties. That way they can get a handle on the problem before it becomes “an infestation”.

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4. *Our school used to do regular lice checks and now they say they can't. Why was this stopped?*
 - The first reason is protection of student privacy.
 - Head lice management as a priority is not possible given the caseload situation, nor is it supported in medical and public health standards.

5. *So what is a parent to do to protect their families from head lice?*
 - It is a very good idea to get in the habit of checking student's heads every week as well as before and after slumber parties.
 - Have students with long hair wear it “contained” (braids, pony-tails, buns) so hair does not tend to inadvertently touch other students.
 - The typical advice of not sharing combs, brushes, hats, coats or any clothing is always good.

6. *What about the businesses that “guarantee” head lice eradication?*
 - Parents are welcome to pursue outside efforts as they choose.
 - Some of these business do not follow Public Health, CDC, and American Academy of Pediatrics guidelines and current medical or scientific research.
 - Some of these business are “for profit” and charge high fees; unless otherwise stated, the fees are not covered by insurance and may cause hardship for some families.
 - Although some parents feel these business have helped them, the school district is not in a position to promote “for profit” businesses.

7. Helpful links:
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/parents.html>

 - <https://www.dshs.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/lice.shtm>