

A NEW LEASE ON LICE

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Head lice becomes most apparent at the beginning of the school year. Parents, Grant County Health Department, school officials, and staff are seeking information and solutions to this annoying problem.

In an effort to inform parents, school staff and students, and also to reduce the incidence of head lice, the schools in Grant County have developed a county-wide plan to manage head lice.

This approach has been developed after talking with Grant County schools as well as schools throughout the state. The goal is not to eradicate pediculosis, since this is impossible, but to keep it at a manageable level and absenteeism at a minimum.

Important and consistent findings about head lice in Wisconsin schools have prompted some aspects to our lice policy. An example of a very consistent finding was that head lice are spread by very close contact, such as sharing combs, brushes, and during sleepovers.

Screening of the classroom of an infested child **does not find new cases**. The best follow-up at school is to screen siblings and friends who have had close contact.

Mass screenings do not find many new cases and many times no new cases. Lice are difficult to see. The nits, (eggs) are usually seen first. A thorough head lice screen takes at least 15 minutes per child, or for a school of 400 students that is 100 hours of screening. All school lice screens in the past have been very time consuming and unproductive.

Helpful Hints to Manage Lice

- ◆ Screen your children weekly. If head lice are present then screen adults in the household.
- ◆ Concentrate less on the environment and more on the child's head, bed linens and child's clothing when treating for lice.
- ◆ Recognize that the treatment is a two-week process of regular daily shampooing followed by a conditioner/crème rinse, and then fine tooth combing of the we hair to remove nits. Removing of the nits is of utmost importance to rid the child of lice. Lice treatment products must be used according to label directions.
- ◆ Lice can be kept at a minimum by doing regular screening and the proper treatments at home.



Grant County Health Department

111 South Jefferson Street, Floor 2
Lancaster, Wisconsin 53813-1672

www.co.grant.wi.gov

Phone: (608) 723-6416 • Fax: (608) 723-6501

Dear Parents:

Head lice is an ongoing problem throughout the school year. This letter is being sent as a reminder that it is important for parents to be screening their children for the presence of head lice.

To detect the presence of head lice early, we suggest checking your family members' heads on a weekly basis. This is done by parting the hair in small sections with a comb looking for bite marks, redness, nits or eggs. The nits are usually found about 1/4 to 2 inch from the scalp. They adhere themselves onto the hair shaft and cannot be easily removed. The louse is a small flat, wingless, brownish-gray creature with a stubby antennae and six legs each ending in a sharp curved claw. They are most commonly found behind the ears and at the nape of the neck, although they may be found anywhere on the head. The louse can be seen with the naked eye. This check should take 15 minutes or more to do and must be done in good light.

To help prevent infestation, we suggest instructing all family members to avoid borrowing personal items, combs, brushes, hats, towels or clothing from each other or from friends. It is best for everyone to use only their own personal articles at home and at school.

If lice or nits are found, they need to be treated with anti-lice shampoo. For more information regarding head lice detection and treatment, contact the Grant County Health Department at 723-6416.

GRANT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Staff Nurses