

# HEAD LICE-PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE SCHOOL POLICIES

## USEFUL INFORMATION

- \* One of the worst “problems” of head lice is adult attitudes; having head lice is not a serious medical condition.
- \* “Irrational” reactions to head lice, e.g., fumigating classrooms, school buses, etc., are expensive and unnecessary.
- \* Much “information” about head lice is based on old, unproven information generated more than 80 years ago, some of it propagated by the companies which sell lice shampoos and sprays.
- \* It is possible but difficult to obtain head lice from casual head to head contact.
  - \* Transmission via clothing, hats, furniture, carpets, is also possible.
- \* Lice are fragile, but can be passed on by hats and combs in some cases.
- \* There is no significant relationship between hair length or personal cleanliness and transmission.
- \* It is unlikely that a nit on a stray hair shaft will hatch because the optimal conditions for hatching exist only on the human head.
- \* Stray lice that fall off a head are injured or dying and incapable of causing a new infestation.
- \* In time, inbreeding of lice on a person’s head causes them to die spontaneously; that’s why kids do not become covered with them. It is a self-limiting condition.
- \* It is possible to tell whether treatment has been successful by the appearance of the eggs.
- \* CONSIDERING THE AVERAGE CASE OF HEAD LICE IS 3-4 MONTHS OLD BEFORE IT IS DETECTABLE, A STRICT NO NIT POLICY IS NOT NECESSARY AND ONLY DEPRIVES CHILDREN OF EDUCATIONAL TIME.
- \* Although schools, day care centers, etc. are often blamed for head lice outbreaks, it is the family unit that maintains cases leading to outbreaks in schools.