

What you should know about. . .

Head lice in the child care setting

Head lice are small but can be seen by the human eye. Tiny lice eggs (called “nits”) look like white grains of sand attached to the hair shafts. Bites from head lice, tiny insects, can cause itching and scratching, primarily on the head and scalp. Head lice may cause inflammation and itching, and they can become infected.

Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching. Anyone can get head lice. Being informed about prevention and signs of head lice is essential wherever children are gathered in groups.

Lice are contagious. Lice do not jump or fly but they can pass from person to person on clothing, bed linens, combs, brushes, and hats. So a day care environment is very susceptible to this common and challenging problem.

As stated in the minimum standards for all child care facilities, all parents must be notified when there is an outbreak of lice or other infestation in the group.

It is also important to refer to the communicable disease chart for schools and child-care centers for exclusion policies, readmission policies and prevention tips. This is found at the back of your minimum standards.

For more current and detailed information

Contact the national pediculosis association at **781-449-NITS** or visit **www.headlice.org** There you will find guidelines for prevention, parent education and notification letters, child care center guidelines and frequently asked questions. You may also call your local licensing office for helpful information.

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