

Campfire Bible Camp Lice Policy

Previous to 2024, Campfire Bible Camp had followed a “no nit” approach with regards to the topic of head lice (pediculosis). In practical terms, this included a screening of all campers upon arrival at Campfire and then the administering of the pesticide free product Resultz immediately upon identification of lice or nits. This was intended as the first of two recommended uses of the product to treat a case of head lice (meant to be administered 7 days apart), with additional treatments or interventions referred back to parents/guardians. The policy also included an option for parents/guardians to choose to pick their child up from camp upon identification of a case of lice or nits and then to proceed with treatment on their own, with proof of treatment needed in order to return the camper to their week of camp.

After several years of implementing this approach and continuing to keep an eye on research and policy changes around head lice, there are some changes that will be made to this policy, due to the following factors:

1. As per the “Head Lice Infestations: A Clinical Update” document put out by the Canadian Paediatric Society, “[head lice] detection requires a degree of expertise and experience...[a] study documented that health care providers and lay personnel frequently overdiagnose or misdiagnose pediculosis and often fail to distinguish active from past infestations, particularly when relying on nit detection only...finding nits close to the scalp is , at best, a modest predictor of a possible active infestation...having nits close to the scalp does not necessarily indicate that a live infestation is underway or will occur.” As Campfire relies on volunteer “head checkers” and treatment providers, it is difficult to ensure that they are identifying active infestations with enough of a degree of accuracy to meaningfully mitigate the spread of lice at camp.
2. An important part of Campfire’s mission and vision is to provide camp experiences to children and youth connected to Streetlight Christian Church and Mercy Christian Church in downtown Hamilton. Undergoing lice checks and possibly treatment almost immediately upon arrival at Campfire can be a difficult and stressful introduction to a week at camp and can feed into the stigma surrounding differences in socioeconomic status that many of these children and youth may already experience so often.
3. As per the document cited above “excluding children with nits or live lice from school or child care has no rational or medical basis and is not recommended”. While summer camp is not explicitly mentioned, the congregate settings of school and child care have enough in common with the congregate setting of children or youth at camp to warrant comparison.

Taking these factors into consideration, the following policies will be followed at Campfire Bible Camp:

1. Education for parents/guardians before camp:
 - a. A helpful resource for understanding what head lice are, how to best identify them and determine whether your child should be treated before their week of camp can be found at:

https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/health-conditions-and-treatments/head_lice

- b. Make sure your child has packed their own hat, comb/hairbrush, hair accessories and/or any item that would be coming into frequent contact with their head. Discuss the precaution with them of not sharing these items with other campers, but encouraging everyone to use their own items.
2. Prevention at camp:
 - a. According to the Canadian Paediatric Society, “head lice spread through direct hair-to-hair contact or indirectly by sharing hats, combs, hairbrushes and headphones.” In light of this, it must be emphasized to staff, volunteers and campers that they must not share those items with one another. If a camper does not have their own brush/comb, any necessary hair accessories (such as hair elastics) or a hat upon arrival at camp, they will be provided with one for their sole use. (Counsellors should check with campers upon arrival or during cabin set-up and can obtain these items from the nurse or CampPal).
 - b. As it has been used for many years at Campfire already and may be helpful in natural prevention and treatment of lice, tea tree oil will continued to be added to the shampoo provided in camp showers and will also be available in “camp hairspray” form which campers and volunteers are encouraged to use daily.
 3. Education for parents/guardians when their child(ren) return home:
 - a. Check your child(ren) for lice and nits (follow guidance in linked page above) in order to determine if you will need to administer any treatment.
 - b. Identify items coming home with your child(ren) that had contact with their head (hats, pillow cases, combs, brushes, hair accessories, headphones). If you have detected lice or wish to be thoroughly preventative, you are advised to either:
 - i. Wash items in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 15 minutes
 - ii. Store items in an airtight plastic bag for two weeks (a ziploc or similar bag that can be sealed and is airtight is recommended)
 - c. Head lice do not live long off the scalp, so there is no need for extra cleaning or disinfecting of other items or environments.
 - d. Reminder: *(quotes from Canadian Paediatric Society document and webpage linked above)* “Head lice infestations are common in school children but are not associated with disease spread or poor hygiene.”
“They are a nuisance and unpleasant, but are not dangerous”.

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