

Lice: Quebec relaxes school guidelines on informing parents

New government guidelines mean some parents might never know someone in their child's class has lice



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Combing out the lice is a popular alternative to using chemical insecticides. *GERRY KAHRMANN / POSTMEDIA NEWS*

New government guidelines mean some parents might never know someone in their child's class has lice.

In the past, school boards would send home a notice to parents even if only one child in the class was found to have lice, and that child would be sent home to have the lice treated.

But under new guidelines provided to school boards by Santé Quebec (<http://sante.gouv.qc.ca/en/>) ahead of the new school year, no action is to be taken until lice affects 10 per cent of the group.

The rules state that sending a letter when only one child is affected merely serves to “dramatically increase the level of anxiety and stigmatization” and “generates inappropriate prophylactic treatments.”

For the time being, however, the English Montreal School Board will continue to send home letters even with just one student infested, according to spokesperson Mike Cohen.

“It is the principals that determine the process to follow when there is a case of lice in their schools,” he said. “Generally, the process is that if there is one child in one class, a letter is sent home to the parents advising them that there is a child with lice and to check their kids.”

He added that while nothing has changed at the EMSB, chairperson Angela Mancini has asked that the board take a fresh look at how incidents of lice are handled in the schools.

The Commission scolaire de Montréal referred all questions to the Centres intégrés universitaires de santé et de services sociaux when contacted by the Montreal Gazette, while the Lester B. Pearson School Board did not return calls seeking comment.

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