

Head lice outbreaks in camp settings cause substantial burden on kids, staff

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New research to be presented at the 2016 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition finds that lice can be the end of a happy summer for many kids at sleepaway camp.

Researchers from the University of Michigan Mott Children's Hospital tracked lice infections in more than 500 summer camps over a three-year period and followed up with a questionnaire to camp leaders. They found 30 percent of camps have a "no nit policy," which excludes campers based on the presence of lice eggs, despite evidence that no-nit policies are not effective.

Sixty percent of camp leaders said lice infections were a substantial burden on staff and the camper's family. Camps often have limited staff resources and children are away from home, making treatment more challenging. That means many kids with lice or nits are sent home for treatment. Reintegrating into the camp experience after treatment can be difficult, and children may suffer a social stigma.

According to the survey, less than 20 percent of campers with nits and live lice were able to stay at camp. Of those children who did receive treatment at camp with standard over the counter treatments, only 40 percent received a second treatment as recommended. Most camp staff do not feel well trained in recognizing or treating lice and would welcome more training on the subject, according to the survey.

"While it's no surprise that summer camps identify [head lice](#) as a significant challenge, current practices regarding lice detection, treatment, and exclusion are often outdated, unnecessarily resource intensive, and pose a greater burden on children, families, and camp staff," said lead researcher Ashley DeHudy, MD, MPH, University of Michigan Pediatrics. "At this time, we have an excellent opportunity to collaborate with summer

campers in developing lice management policies and educational training materials that will efficiently and effectively treat head lice."

More information: Dr. DeHudy will present the abstract, "Scratching Our Heads: A Survey of Current Practices for Head Lice Detection and Management in United States Summer Camps," at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday Oct. 22 in the Nob Hill AC room of the Marriott Marquis Hotel.

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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