
Purchasing for Pollution Prevention

Successful Lindane-Free Control of Head Lice and Scabies

In order to protect the state's surface waters from lindane contamination, the California legislature enacted a ban on the use of lindane for lice or scabies treatment that took effect in January 2002. Experience at several large institutions in California demonstrates that effective lice control can be achieved without the use of lindane.

Case Study: California Department of Corrections

California's penal system, with a population of approximately 150,000 inmates per year, has been free of lindane for over two years. According to Dr. Evalyn Horowitz, Chief of Public Health at the California Department of Corrections, the state's Department of Health advised against the use of lindane even before the ban took effect in January 2002. As a result, the corrections system has had significant experience with lindane-free head lice and scabies control.

The department does not make any prophylactic use of pesticides, since such use is ineffective and will unnecessarily increase pesticide exposure and resistance. Over the past two years, Elimite cream (5% permethrin) has been used to treat scabies and a variety of non-lindane products have been used to treat lice upon diagnosis. The Department of Corrections recommends using combs to treat head lice. Prison medical personnel indicate that the lindane-free treatments are satisfactory.

For more information, contact Dr. Evalyn Horowitz, Chief, Public Health Section, Health Care Services Division, California Department of Corrections, PO Box 942883, 501 J Street, Suite 520, Sacramento, CA 94283; Tel: 916-322-6057; horowitz@healthcare.corr.ca.gov.

Case Study: Sutter Delta Medical Center

The Sutter Delta Medical Center in Antioch, California, is successfully treating lice and scabies without lindane. According to pharmacist Steven Gomez, combs and Nix (1% permethrin) are being used to treat approximately 15 cases of lice per year. Elimite cream (5% permethrin) is used to treat scabies. The hospital does not use scabicides as a prophylactic against transmission. Both alternative treatments are considered as effective as lindane, and no problems have been reported.

For more information, contact Steven Gomez, Sutter Delta Medical Center, 3901 Lone Tree Way, Antioch, CA 94509; Tel: 925-756-1118; www.sutterdelta.org.