

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE



WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that live on the scalp. They do not carry any diseases so are not a public health risk. Anyone can get head lice.

NITS

- Nits are eggs that are laid by a female louse and are firmly attached to the hair shaft.
- They are about the size of a pinhead and are often found along the forehead, back of the head and behind the ears and are within 1 cm of the scalp.
- The nits are grayish-white, tan or yellow. Some can be the same colour as hair, making them difficult to see.
- Nits hatch in 6-10 days.



ADULT LICE

- Lice are the size of a sesame seed and are tan to grayish-white in colour. They may look darker in people with dark hair.
- They need blood to survive and can live up to 30 days on the head but will die within 1-2 days if they fall off the head.



HOW IS HEAD LICE SPREAD?

- Head lice are spread mainly through direct head-to-head contact. When heads are close together lice crawl very quickly from one head to another. Lice cannot fly or jump.
- They may also be spread by sharing items such as combs and hats but this is less common.
- Head lice do not live on animals.



WHAT DO I LOOK FOR?

WATCH FOR

- Frequent itching and sores on the scalp from scratching.



There may be no symptoms. Check all family members for lice by:

- Using good lighting. Daylight is best, so try sitting by a window.
- Looking throughout the hair for lice. They can be difficult to see because they are small, hide within the hair and move very quickly.
- Using a magnifying glass and fine toothed comb can help.
- Looking for nits firmly attached to the hair shaft and within 1cm of the scalp. Part the hair into small sections and move from one side of the head to the other. Nits can be confused with dandruff or hair spray droplets-they will not fall off if touched.
- Nits will only come off if they are pulled off with your finger nails or nit comb.



DISTRICT REGULATION & PROCEDURE

For additional information related to live lice and nits, please [click HERE](#) to view the GTPS District Regulation 5141.30R "Health Examinations".

TREATMENT PLAN TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Use lice treatment as directed. All lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution. Regular shampooing will not kill head lice. **NOTE: Lice treatments can be harmful if not used correctly. Keep lice treatments out of the reach of children. Read and follow all directions carefully. Talk to your doctor if your child has ragweed allergy, asthma, history of seizures, or is under the age of 2 years.**

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY PERSONS WITH LICE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD

Thoroughly screen all household members and inform any of the child's close contacts regarding exposure i.e.: friends, overnight guests, relatives, sports team (especially those teams sharing helmets and caps) and all other possible outside contacts.

STEP TWO: MEDICATED SHAMPOO

Use a safe lice-killing treatment that is effective such as RID, NIX or alternative method, which is available, over-the-counter without a prescription. Be sure to read product label carefully before treating the child.

- ❖ Lice-killing treatments may not be 100% effective in killing nits and lice. Nits often survive, hatch, and re-infest the child and others. The remaining nits will hatch within seven days. Therefore, a second treatment is recommended. Read and follow product label directions for second treatment. Pay particular attention to the amount of time recommended for the lice-killing treatment to be left on the hair and scalp. **(The lice-killing treatment should not be used on a regular basis or as a preventative measure.)**
- ❖ Itching may occur after treatment due to scalp irritation.
- ❖ Consult a health care provider if the child or family members are pregnant, nursing, under two years of age, have open wounds on their scalp or neck, have known allergies or if eyebrows and eyelashes are infested.
- ❖ These precautions apply to the persons administering the treatment as well as those receiving the treatment.

STEP THREE: DAILY COMBING (Use of a Metal Nit/Lice Comb is preferred)

After treatment/shampooing remove nits or any remaining lice on hair daily by:

- ❖ Combing out the child's hair.
- ❖ Separating child's hair into small sections.
- ❖ Starting at the top of the head next to the scalp lift one inch of hair up and out and comb the entire length of the hair strand.
- ❖ Repeating all sections until thoroughly combed, remembering the bangs.
- ❖ Using a comb specifically designed for removing nits.
- ❖ **Regular shampoo and conditioner/crème rinse daily for two weeks, followed by fine tooth wet combing with a "nit/lice" comb assures success in eliminating lice.**
- ❖ Nits and lice that are removed from head should be placed in a sealed plastic bag for the outside trash. Do not drop them on the floor. Vacuum the area where child's hair was combed daily.

NOTE: This is a very time consuming procedure. Depending on the length of your child's hair, this process may take several hours.

Some suggestions for younger children:

- ❖ Give child a bath before bedtime and use a conditioner (regular product such as VO5, Suave, etc.)
- ❖ Rinse conditioner as normal.
- ❖ Have child sit in an adult's lap with good lighting available.
- ❖ Put in your child's favorite video or TV show (helps distract child from adult doing the combing)
- ❖ Praise your child for being still and cooperative with the combing sessions.

The most important effort is in the daily shampoo, conditioner/crème rinse, and wet combing technique described in Step #2 above.

STEP FOUR: ENVIRONMENT

Assure that the child's personal belongings are machine washed in hot soapy water. i.e.: hats, caps, bed linens and clothing. Wash combs and brushes in hot water.

Environmental Lice Sprays are generally not effective and not recommended.

Pets do not carry human head lice; therefore, spraying pets is unnecessary since head lice need human blood to survive.

*The information contained in this handout is for general information only and should not be considered complete.
For specific information on your child and head lice, please ask your doctor or nurse practitioner.*