

Head Lice – Home Prevention and Control of Head Lice

LICE FACTS:

- Lice do not fly, hop, or jump. They move by crawling rapidly.
- Human lice feed and live only on humans. You cannot “catch” head lice from pets.
- Lice must feed every 4 to 6 hours and will die after 24 hours off a human.
- No treatment will kill 100% of the eggs. Lice can “hold their breath” and go dormant for 4 hours.

HOW TO CHECK FOR HEAD LICE:

- Use a strong light, and examine hair and scalp by section
- Look for:
 - Eggs or nits: tiny, oval, “drops” firmly glued to the hair.
 - Insects: red-brown or grayish, about 1/8 inch long, crawl rapidly
 - Rashes on the back of the neck near the hairline.
- Hair spray, sweat drops; sand, dandruff & hair casts may look like nits but are not firmly attached.

PREVENTION:

- Check hair weekly and after over-night visits with other children.
- Educate children to avoid sharing hats, combs, brushes, etc.
- **EGGS NOT KILLED BY TREATMENTS WILL CONTINUE TO HATCH.**
- Eggs may not be visible when freshly laid: recheck in a few days because they may be easier to find as the hair grows and the nit moves farther from the scalp.
- New infestations will be easier to recognize if old nits (eggs) are removed from the hair.

CLEANING:

- Use hot wash and dry for exposed clothing, bedding, towels, etc.
- Store soft or cuddle toys and pillows in plastic bags for 14 days.
- Thoroughly clean brushes and combs. Wash in hot soapy water or boil if possible.
- Vacuum furniture, car seats, rugs, and carpets: Discard vacuum bag when finished.
- There is no need to use any type of insecticide spray.

TREATMENT OPTIONS:

OVER-THE-COUNTER or PRESCRIBED TREATMENT SHAMPOOS AND CREAM RINSES:

Consult your physician for advice prior to using products if you are pregnant, if the child is very young or ill, or if you or your child have asthma or plant allergies.

- Follow product instructions carefully and completely.
- Do not use any medicated lice treatment more often than recommended or for prevention!
- You may begin using the lice comb while the shampoo is in the hair.
- Continue removing eggs and nits over the next few days.

NON-CHEMICAL ALTERNATIVE: Long tooth metal combs are available at some pharmacies and are distributed by school nurses (one/family) at no cost. It should be used to comb through wet hair before regular shampoo or cream rinse is rinsed out. The comb is inserted parallel to the scalp and drawn slowly through the full length of the hair until all lice and nits are removed. This is a very effective/low risk treatment method.

NEVER USE ALCOHOL, SOLVENTS, INSECTICIDES, OR FLAMMABLE PRODUCTS

TIPS ON NIT REMOVAL:

- A vinegar and water (one-to-one mixture) can be applied to the hair to help loosen the nits. Apply vinegar, wrap hair in damp towel and wait 30 min.
- Use a lice comb, teeth are fine and closely spaced so nits/lice are caught and combed out.
- Removing nits with fingernails is also effective.
- Sticking the removed egg or nit to a piece of tape prevents dropping it.
- Removing nits is time consuming; work on the hair daily for short periods of time.