



Head Lice – Information Sheet

Signs: Intense itching and scratch of the scalp and the back of the neck.

Nits: Small silvery egg cases attached to the individual hair shafts. These cannot be brushed off like dandruff.

Live Lice: These can be hard to see and should be looked for behind the ears and the back of the head/neck. A hand held lens may be of assistance. Head lice can be contracted by anyone, anywhere. They can be transmitted by:

- Direct head-to-head contact with someone who has head lice.
- Personal items such as combs, brushes and other hair care items, towels and bed linens.
- Clothing such as hats, ribbons and other head covers.

Treatment: Treatment consists of washing the head and scalp with specially medicated shampoo and combing out the nits with a fine tooth comb. Nits are killed by the shampoo but are not removed. Therefore, the combing is an important part of the process. Combing with a fine tooth comb should be done daily until no more nits are found. A nit comb can be purchased for this purpose (found at most drug stores).

There are over the counter shampoos available for lice. Your family health care provider may recommend a prescription shampoo as well. RID or NIX shampoos are available over the counter and after the initial treatment, it will be necessary to repeat treatment in 10 days since this is the time it takes for the nits to hatch. It is also import to check all family members and treat when necessary. This should be carried out for a least two weeks. Also washing all bedding, personal clothes and personal articles, such as brushes and combs in hot water and a disinfectant.

If lice are detected at school these procedures will be followed:

1. Parent of the affected child will be contacted for pick-up and treatment. Parents of the affected child's class will be notified.
2. Parents will treat as directed (shampoo, comb and disinfect).
3. Child can return to school if treated and if no lice are observed in the child's hair.
4. Ten days later the affected child should be treated again (see above procedures).

There is nothing to be embarrassed about whether you discover head lice on your child or are notified by the school. Between eight and ten million school children are infected with head lice each year. You may think, "But my child is so clean." The bad news about lice is that they don't particularly care about cleanliness. They just seek a warm head of hair to live in. The good news however is that head lice are not known to carry any diseases. While these tiny, annoying insects are nothing to panic about, they should not be ignored either. If left untreated, lice can survive on the scalp for about 30 days and can be spread among family, etc.

How you can prevent lice from returning:

- Take bedding home to wash and any other washable items your child has at school. For personal items (i.e., stuffed animals) and clothing that cannot be washed at high temperatures, isolate them in a plastic bag for two weeks. Then open the bag outdoors and shake each item vigorously.
- Carefully vacuum mattresses, sofas, carpets and other furniture to pick up live lice or nits. Lice-control sprays are also available for these objects. Pillows, etc. can be put in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- Don't hesitate to contact the parents of your child's closest friends to tell them about lice. The control and prevention of lice is merely a matter of taking the proper precautions and moving swiftly once they're discovered. Once your child has been treated and the lice eliminated, remind your child **not** to share personal belongs such as hats, coats, headbands, scarves, combs or brushes with friends.