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INFORMATION FOR PARENTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head lice are tiny insects that can get on people’s scalp. Once there, they reproduce quickly. They lay eggs and cause severe itching of the scalp. Head lice do not spread disease. They do not live on animals. It does not matter if the hair is long or short, dirty or clean. Children and adults of any age and race can get head lice.

HOW YOU CAN GET LICE

- Lice do not jump or fly
- People must have their heads close together so the lice can crawl (short distances only) from one head to another
- Lice may also be spread by sharing combs, hats, scarves, sweaters, coats, brushes and pillows
- Lice can crawl from clothing or personal items that are stored in one place such as piles of hats or coats at friends’ homes, school or meeting places
- Lice & their eggs can live on upholstered chairs, carpet or car seats

WHAT LICE AND THEIR EGGS (“NITS”) LOOK LIKE

- Lice are:
 - Small insects that are about 1/8” to 1/10” long (about this (-) long)
 - They are grayish white with dark edges
 - They have three legs on each side of their body
 - They run quickly from light, so can be difficult to see
 - On the head, lice can live for 28-30 days
 - Lice need about 5 blood meals a day to live
 - They die within 24-48 hours if they fall off the scalp
- Nits are:
 - Lice eggs. They look like a sesame seed
 - Nits are attached by a glue-like substance to the hair, which makes them very hard to remove. To tell the difference, remember that dry skin or lint will brush off easily; nits will not come off easily
 - Nits are laid at the end of a hair within ¼” of the scalp. The nit will move up the hair as the hair grows
 - Nits hatch in 7-10 days
 - Nits that are more than 1/2” from the scalp have hatched and are no longer alive

HOW TO CHECK FOR LICE AND NITS

- Most people have had lice up to a month before they are discovered
- Watch for children scratching their head a lot
- Use a pencil to separate the hair into parts. Look through the hair carefully, especially at the back of the neck, top of the head and behind the ears for nits. Look for movement especially at the neck and behind the ears

WHO TO TREAT

- **Check** all family members at the same time for lice and nits
- **Treat** only people who actually have live lice or nits
- The treatment will not prevent people from getting lice

HOW TO TREAT

- Several different treatments are available
- You may want to check with your medical provider for advice on treatment

HOUSEHOLD CLEANING

The following household procedures are necessary to prevent re-infestation and must be repeated with each treatment.

- Clothing, linens, etc., that have been in contact with the head of the person with lice, should be washed in hot water for 20 minutes -OR- put items in a clothes dryer on high heat for at least 20 minutes
- Clothing which is not washable should be dry cleaned -OR- placed in a plastic bag and sealed for 10 days
- Stuffed animals should be sealed in a plastic bag for 10 days
- Soak combs and brushes using one of the following methods:
 - Solution of medicated shampoo (2 tablespoons to 1-cup water) for one (1) hour
 - Heat a pan of water on the stove until just before the water starts to boil. Remove from heat and immediately place combs and brushes in heated water and leave for 5-10 minutes
- Mattresses, pillows, upholstered furniture and carpets should be cleaned thoroughly with a vacuum cleaner. Throw the vacuum cleaner bag away after use

PREVENTION

- Please check your child's scalp often for nits and live lice
- Instruct family members not to share combs, brushes, hats and other personal items
- Children may come back to school after being treated for lice
- Only nits that are within ¼" from the scalp must be removed

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

American Academy of Pediatrics

Head Lice: What Parents Need to Know

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/from-insects-animals/Pages/Signs-of-Lice.aspx>

National Association of School Nurses

Headlice Management in the School Setting (Position Statement)

<https://www.nasn.org/nasn/advocacy/professional-practice-documents/position-statements/ps-head-lice>

CDC:

Head Lice Information for Schools

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

Parasites: Lice: Head Lice

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/>

Dr. Richard Pollack:

<https://identify.us.com/idmybug/head-lice/index.html>