

HEAD LICE INSTRUCTIONS

Head lice is an easily treated condition that is not associated with any serious medical complications. This will acquaint you with the nature of this condition and what should be done to get rid of it.

HOW YOU GET IT: Head lice are usually transmitted through direct head-to-head contact with another affected individual (usually where they sleep). It can also be spread by use of shared combs, brushes, or hats. Some people have the impression that lice like to be on people who are unclean. This NOT true. Frequent bathing will neither prevent or get rid of head lice.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: Mature head lice are about this (—) long and are grayish-white to dark brown. Lice do not have wings and cannot fly. They do not jump. They do move quickly in hair which makes them difficult to find in a child's hair. Lice legs are specifically formed to hold onto a circular hair shaft. And they cannot hold onto other objects very well.

Since lice can be difficult to see, the diagnosis of head lice is frequently made on the basis of finding nits. A nit is a louse (lice) egg. Nits are teardrop in shape, about this size (') and vary in color from dark brown to yellowish-white. Head lice attach each nit to a hair shaft with a waterproof, cement-like substance. Thus, nits cannot be washed out or brushed out of the hair like dandruff. Clusters of nits may be found in any section of hair, but in mild infestations a careful examination of the entire scalp may be necessary to detect them.

TREATMENT: Treatment is targeted at the individual found to have lice and his/her personal articles, e.g., caps, combs, brushes, clothing, towels, and bedding.

A. Individual Treatment:

1. Remove all of your child's clothing and place him or her in a bath or shower stall and the clothing in a plastic bag. Wash clothing according to the directions below.
2. Apply and rinse the head louse treatment according to the manufacturer's instructions. Then allow the hair to dry before removing the nits. There are treatments available that you can get at the drugstore such as Nix, Rid, Vamousse and Lice Free. If you have private insurance for prescriptions or a medical assistance card, the cost of the medication may be covered by insurance. Contact your doctor to order these.
3. Examine the hair strand by strand and remove the nits either with your finger nails or with a nit comb. A comb is usually included with the shampoo treatment. Use a rubber band to gather the hair you have already cleaned so you can take breaks as needed, and know exactly where you left off. You can put newspapers down on the floor to collect nits you remove, and then fold the newspapers and put them in the garbage.
4. Have your child put on clean clothing after treatment.
5. All family members and close friends of your child should be checked for lice, and treated if lice or nits are found. Be extra careful checking siblings or parents who share a bed with the child who has lice. However, other family members should NOT be treated preventatively if lice or nits are not found.

B. Decontamination of Personal Articles and Environment:

Heat kills lice and their eggs, so many personal articles can be disinfected by machine washing in hot water and drying using the hot cycle of the dryer. Eggs are killed in 5 minutes at 51.5 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit), and lice die at slightly lower temperatures. Home water heaters keep water at about 60 degrees celsius when the heat selector is set on medium or high. However some water heaters are not able to sustain the 60 degrees celsius water temperature when several loads of laundry are processed one after the other or when other demands for hot water (bathing) are made at the same time. To maintain the water at 60 degrees celsius or higher, allow time between loads of laundry or baths for the water heater to regain its maximum water temperature. If total reliance is placed on the clothes dryer for disinfection, dry articles for at least 20 minutes at the high heat setting. Some non-washable articles may be disinfected in the dryer if the heat will not harm them.

1. Machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with your child with the previous days.
2. Personal articles of clothing or bedding that cannot be washed or dried may be left in a plastic bag and sealed for 10 days.
3. Combs, brushes, and similar items can be disinfected by soaking them in one of the pediculicide liquids for 1 hour or by soaking them in a pan of water heated on the stove to about 150 degrees Fahrenheit for 5-10 minutes (caution: heat may damage some combs and brushes).
4. Mattresses and upholstered furniture and carpeting should be vacuumed carefully to pick up living lice or nits that attached to recently fallen hairs. Repeat daily for 7 days. It is not recommended, to spray furniture and rugs with insecticides, as these can be dangerous to children and pets.

Notification of Other Parents: You should contact your child's closest friends, and notify them to check their children as well. This is really important if the children have slept over houses or participated in activities involving close body contact. Feel free to contact the school nurse to check close contacts at school.

Returning to School: Your child may return to school after he or she has been treated with a head louse product, and there are no live lice present. The school nurse will check the child returning to school and make sure treatment with the product was successful.