

HEAD LICE (PEDICULOSIS) FACTS

SYMPTOMS: HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD HAS HEAD LICE?

- * Very itchy scalp, redness and irritation especially at hairline and behind ears.
- * Observation of adult lice moving through hair or lice eggs (nits). To find signs of lice: Examine back of neck and around ears with a magnifying glass in good light. You may not always see adult lice – they move fast. Nits are small, oval shaped, and cling to one side of the hair follicle at the scalp or up to 1" from the scalp. If they are opaque they are likely empty shells. If they are tan or black they have not yet hatched. Bright white flakes that fall off easily when the hair is shaken are dead skin or dandruff. **DO NOT TREAT YOUR CHILD UNLESS YOU FIND AN ACTIVE INFESTATION.** If you have doubts – have a physician, hairdresser, school nurse, or other experienced person examine your child – see pictures on reverse.
- * If your child has been in close contact with a friend, family member or classmate with head lice – check them regularly. **HEAD LICE DO NOT JUMP, FLY, SWIM, OR LIVE MORE THAN 48 HOURS OFF A HUMAN HEAD.** They are most often spread through direct head-to-head contact – sometimes through sharing a hat or brush with an infected person.

TREATMENTS: HOW DO I GET RID OF HEAD LICE?

- * Use a lotion or liquid from a pharmacy that is specifically made for head lice. Follow the directions **EXACTLY**, including follow-up treatment. Most include a special nit comb. Popular brands are RID and NIX. Some hair types and stubborn cases required a **REALLY GOOD COMB** – see reverse. For repeat infestations you should change products, as they contain different insecticides. **DON'T USE MORE THAN RECOMMENDED DOSAGE** – these products contain strong insecticides. Each brand may have different directions, so read carefully.
- * You may consider a shorter haircut if your child has thick, long, hair (to make combing easier), but **PLEASE** do not shave a child's head unless he is a boy and likes this style.
- * Most products are effective at killing adult lice, however they do not kill all eggs. **COMBING** is the most important step – make sure you clean the comb and any brush or clips used after each combing session. Comb through damp hair thoroughly each day until you find no eggs. Be sure to comb again to examine for lice or nits after the follow-up treatment.

TREATMENTS: HOW DO I TREAT MY HOME?

Lice do not infest furniture, bedding or pets. They need a human scalp to live and generally do not want to leave the scalp unless they are removed or are dying. However, it is recommended that you do the following with items that have been in direct contact with an affected person.

- * Machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens in **HOT** water (130 F). Dry clean what is not washable.
- * You can seal items (for 2 weeks) in a plastic bag. This includes stuffed animals, blankets, etc., or place them in a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- * Soak comb and brushes in rubbing alcohol, or strong cleaner for 1 hour or you can wash them with soap and very hot water, or boil them.
- * Vacuum the floor and furniture. Be aware that commercial room sprays for lice can be toxic and dangerous to people with allergies, asthma, pregnant or nursing women.

CAUTION: People with asthma, allergies or pregnant and nursing women should consult their doctor before using any commercial (insecticide) head lice formulas. There are non-toxic treatments available. See web sites below.

PREVENTION: HOW DO I PREVENT RE-INFESTATION?

- * Treat your child correctly: follow directions on a commercial head lice product or those given by a physician or pharmacist. Many people panic when they get lice and many myths and ineffective cures are circulated. Don't follow or spread false information!
- * Most treatments require a repeat treatment in 7 or 10 days. Don't forget this – even if your child appears to be nit-free.
- * Talk to your child about not sharing hats, scarves, combs and brushes.
- * Be honest! Tell everyone your child has been in close contact with – this may help a friend and will likely keep your child from being re-infested. Head lice are a common problem and have nothing to do with cleanliness or lack of it. Anyone can get lice – including adults.
- * **INFORM YOUR CHILD'S TEACHER IMMEDIATELY** – so they can do a class head-check.
- * **INFORM STAFF at ANY AFTER-SCHOOL CLASSES OR ACTIVITIES YOUR CHILD IS INVOLVED IN** – lice are spread wherever children are in close contact with each other.

NOTE: Effective SPRING 2008, New York City Schools have a "no head lice" policy which means that any student who has lice in their hair or scalp is not allowed to attend school until they have received treatment. Following treatment, a child will be allowed back in school if his/her hair is free of lice upon re-inspection. "No head lice" policies are supported by national organizations such as American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association and the National Association of School Nurses. Similar policies have been adopted successfully by school systems throughout the country.

UNDERSTAND THE HEAD LICE LIFE CYCLE:



Eggs (Nits) : The female louse lays the egg with a special glue that cements it to the hair shaft near the root. The eggs develop and hatch approximately 7-10 days later.

Nymphs: Once the louse hatches, it is called a nymph and is barely visible to the naked eye. The nymph cannot reproduce because it is not fully developed. After about 12 days, it becomes an adult.



Adults: The adult louse can lay up to 4-10 eggs a day - starting another generation of lice. The adult stage lasts about 28 days.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ✓ www.headlice.org – National Pediculosis Assoc. – good info/link to LiceMeister comb.
- ✓ www.licessquad.com – Canadian nit-pickers who sell quality combs and give advice.
- ✓ <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/lice/headlice018.shtml> –detailed instruction on non-toxic removal.
- ✓ www.liceguard.com - lice removal products – including non-toxic alternative RobiComb – electronic lice detector/removal comb.