



## **Head Lice Information**

### **What are head lice?**

- Head lice are small tan to grayish-white insects, about the size of a sesame seed and have six legs
- Lice don't usually carry disease.
- Lice can live up to 30 days on a person's head and lay from 50-150 eggs total. They can lay up to 8 eggs per day. Eggs hatch in 6-9 days.
- Lice need to feed on blood every 3-6 hours.
- If lice falls off a person, it dies within 2 days
- If your school has identified head lice and contacted you, make sure you check everyone's head in your house.

### **How did my child get head lice?**

- Children get head lice from other people who have it.
- Lice crawl from child to child anytime they are close together or by sharing combs, brushes, hair fasteners, hats, caps coats, scarves, and even cell phones.
- Children get head lice almost as often as they get the common cold
- If left behind, lice can attach to your child while sitting on carpets or furniture.
- Lice can attach themselves to stuffed toys.
- Lice cannot hop, jump or fly
- When live lice move from one child's head to another, they begin laying eggs immediately if they are an adult, or once they are mature (adults after 7 days from hatching)

### **How do I know if my child has head lice?**

- Itching is the first sign of lice. They may have had it for weeks before you identify lice.
- Check the entire head and scalp, especially behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck when scratching begins.
- Lice eggs (nits) may be found before you see lice because of how many eggs they can lay.
- Nits are very tiny; about the size of a knot of thread and shaped like a long football.
- Nits are yellow to white in color and may be mistaken for dandruff or hair spray droplets.
- Nits attach to hair with a waterproof cement-like substance and are difficult to remove (main way to tell difference of head lice vs dandruff is you can't easily move it off of the hair)

### **How can I get rid of head lice:**

- Treatment must be done with a shampoo or cream rinse approved by the FDA.
- Treatments can be purchased without a prescription at stores that carry drug store products. Sometimes you will need to resort to a prescription shampoo/cream if the over the counter method doesn't work. Talk to your child's doctor for more information.
- Follow treatment instructions closely.
- After treatment, try to separate hair into sections and remove nits from the scalp to the ends of the hair after you have followed the instructions for the shampoo/cream.
- You will need to thoroughly comb and pick out the nits with a good lice comb (plastic combs in the kits don't work well) or use your fingers to slide them off the hair. Remove nits in a well-lit area. Natural light works best if available.

- All products recommend a second treatment 7-10 days after the first treatment in order to kill any remaining or newly hatched lice. \*Eggs (nits) do not get killed by over-the-counter shampoo. You need to retreat to kill all insects that have hatched between treatments. Please know that they will continue to hatch in between treatments. You need to continue to vacuum/clean during this process.
- Soak combs and brushes in lice shampoo for 1 hour in very hot water.
- Wash sheets, blankets and bedding in the hottest setting possible. Dry on high heat setting in the dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Dry clean non-washable items or seal them in a plastic bag for 2 weeks. (remove the bags from living areas ie) unfinished basement, garage, shed, etc).
- Vacuum furniture, carpet, mattresses and car's interior thoroughly.
- Discard vacuum debris every time you finish vacuuming.
- Please contact your child's school with new cases of head lice. This would include any after school groups/teams, out of school care facilities, friends or family that you have been with in the past few weeks.

#### **Myths and truths about head lice treatment:**

1. Using liquids like gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner or insect repellent may harm your child more than it would the lice. Chemicals should not be used unless they are approved by the FDA for specific treatment of head lice.
2. Do not use hair dryers to kill lice or their eggs. The temperature would have to be turned up so high it could easily cause serious burns on the scalp.
3. Hair gels, hairspray, oils or other non-medicated hair products will not kill lice or prevent eggs from hatching or sticking to the hair. The nits will hatch and your child will be infested with lice again.
4. Vinegar rinses or mayonnaise do not kill nits or detach them from the hair.
5. Cutting your child's hair or shaving their head to get rid of lice won't keep lice away. Lice stick to short and just "grown in" hair too.
6. Pets and other animals don't carry head lice and can't contract head lice from people.
7. If you continue to have head lice in your house, talk with your school nurse or child's physician to see what other suggestions they may have for you!

**Routine screening and early detection is the best and only prevention of head lice outbreaks.**

**SCREEN - DETECT - REMOVE - PROTECT**