

## ***Pediculosis capitis aka Head Lice***

Head lice are a common occurrence among young children. Education, prevention and individual accountability are required to obtain effective head lice control.

Parents are highly encouraged to make lice inspection part of their child's personal hygiene care at home. Parental screenings are most easily done as part of your child's normal routine-after bathing or showering when their hair would be combed anyway.

If you think your child has head lice.....

- 1) please call your physician for their treatment recommendations,
- 2) do not send your child to school until treatment is completed and your child is lice and nit free.

It is imperative that you inform the school nurse that your child has head lice so that other students in your child's class can be checked for head lice.

### ***What are they?***

Head lice are tiny insects that live only on people's scalp and hair.

The lice hatch from small eggs (nits), which are firmly attached to the individual hairs near the scalp and cannot be easily moved up or down the hair ( as can specks of dandruff) or brushed out or removed with a regular comb.

Nits are more prevalent at the nape of the neck, around the ears and at the crown of the head, check the entire scalp since nits can be found anywhere in the hair.

Nits are tiny and can be difficult to remove.

The eggs hatch in about 10 days, with new lice reaching adulthood in about 2 weeks.

The female louse is about the size of a sesame seed, can live for 20 or 30 days and can lay about 6 eggs a day. The lice live by biting and sucking blood from the scalp and can survive up to 8 hours between feedings.

### ***How should you check for Head lice?***

Two people checking through a child's hair at the same time can be helpful.

Look carefully, using a magnifying glass and natural light.

Lice are about the size of a sesame seed, clear, pearl gray in color when first hatched and then become brown after they feed, and move quickly away from the light.

They are most commonly found at the nape of the neck, around the ears and at the crown of the head, but check the entire head.

### ***How do you get Head lice?***

Head lice are spread by direct head-to-head contact. Transmission of lice occurs most often among family members due to the close proximity of living conditions. Families who share beds and hair implements have an increased risk of transmission (Vessey, 2000).

A louse that has fallen from a human host to the floor or another surface will most likely not survive long enough to infest a new host. Moreover, lice cannot jump, fly, swim, or crawl long distances, so it is incorrect to assume that transmission occurs in this manner(Hansen, 2004)

Lice are spread **ONLY** by crawling from person to person directly or onto shared personal items, such as combs, brushes, head coverings, clothing, bedding or towels.

Please note: lice transmission in schools is rare because close head-to-head contact would have to occur and this generally does not happen in the school setting. However, head lice became associated with the school setting due to school screenings conducted in early September that detected infestations that occurred over the summer. Children playing together during the warmer months have a higher potential of spreading the condition to siblings and playmates (Hansen).

***What should you do about head lice?***

If your child does have head lice, check everyone in your family for lice.

Use a medicine which your health care provider prescribes or recommends. Use any of these products very carefully, and consult a physician before treating infants, pregnant or nursing women, or people with extensive cuts or scratches on the head or neck.

**Remove all nits** after shampooing the hair with medicine. This is a difficult and time consuming process because the nits have such a firm grip on the hair. Using a solution of vinegar and water may help loosen nits so you can remove them with a special comb just for this purpose. The gold standard and most recommended comb for lice & nit removal is the LiceMeister\* by The National Pediculosis Association.

**Check for nits daily for the next 10 to 14 days**

**Clean personal items and surroundings:**

Machine wash all washable and possibly infested items in **Hot** water.

Dry them in a **Hot** dryer

Put non-washable (furry toys or pillows) in a **Hot** dryer for 20 minutes or dry clean

Seal items that cannot be washed or dried in a plastic bag for 30 days (the life cycle of a louse).

Boil combs and brushes for 10 minutes, or soak them for 1 hour in a bleach solution of 1 tablespoon of bleach mixed with 1 quart of water

Thoroughly vacuum rugs, upholstered furniture and mattresses

Do not use insecticide sprays, because they can be harmful to people and animals

Your child may return to school as soon as the treatment has been completed and they are free of lice and/or nits, and you have cleaned or stored personal items.

Please Note\*\*

Your child must check in with the school nurse before they go their classroom on the day they return to school.\*\*\*

**Remember:** you must keep checking your child's hair for lice and nits every day for the next two weeks to a month.

Hansen, R.C. (2004). Overview: The state of lice management and control. *The Journal of Managed Care, 10*, S260-S263

Sciscione, Patricia, RN,BSN,CEN; No-Nit Policies in Schools: Time for Change. *The Journal of School Nursing, 13-20*.

Vessey, J.A. (2000). *Current Concepts in Pediculosis Management*. Scarborough, ME: NASN

Please refer to [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

For Combing Instructions Video & Tips for Head Lice Removal