

HELP CONTROL HEAD LICE

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are small insects that live on the scalp of humans. While they may be found anywhere on the head, they usually prefer to live on the scalp along the neckline and behind the ears. When lice bite the scalp they cause itching.

Head lice are very small – each one about the size of a sesame seed. They are usually grayish white or transparent. Some may even take on the color of the person's hair. Lice are usually hard to see because they move so quickly.

Lice lay eggs called nits. Nits are small, white and oval. Lice lay the nits on the hair close to the scalp. Each nit is attached to the hair with a cement-like, waterproof substance. Therefore, they cannot be washed out or flicked off like dandruff.

Anyone can get head lice. It is common in places where people work or play together for long periods of time. It is common in classrooms and day care centers because of the closeness of children and their belongings.

HOW DO YOU GET HEAD LICE?

Contrary to popular belief, uncleanliness does not cause head lice. Head lice cannot jump or fly and you cannot get them from animals or pets. You get lice by:

- having close head-to-head contact with someone who has had lice, or
- sharing things that come in contact with a person's head or neck, such as combs, brushes, barrettes, ribbons, caps, scarves, helmets and coats.

Head lice can also be spread when personal items such as coats and caps come into contact with the personal items belonging to a person who has head lice, for example, clothing hanging in a closet or cloakroom.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT THE SPREADING OF HEAD LICE?

- If you child scratches his or her head frequently, or if you hear that one of your child's friends or classmates had head lice, you should check your child's hair for:
 - Nits attached to individual hairs and lice on the scalp
- Parents should develop a weekly routine of checking their child's head for lice and nits.
- Teachers, day-care workers, coaches and all group leaders should also watch for signs of head lice in children.
- Children should learn how head lice are spread and how to avoid them.
- If head lice or nits are found in the household, and there is a school-aged child in the family, you should:
 - Notify the school immediately.
 - Check all household members
 - Avoid all close head-to-head contact with other people until treatment has been carried out.
 - Treat all household members with head lice promptly and at the same time.
 - Notify the parents of your child's close playmates to check for head lice.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT FOR HEAD LICE?

1. Treat all household members with head lice using a special rinse or shampoo.
R & C shampoo or Eurax lotion may be used for pregnant women, nursing mothers and infants under two years of age.
2. Remove all the nits by using a fine-toothed (nit) comb, tweezers, or by sliding them off the end of the hair strand by strand.
3. Soak all personal hair care items such as brushes, combs, barrettes, pins and clips in very hot water for 10 minutes to kill any lice that may be clinging to these items.

4. All washable clothing and bedding should be washed in very hot water and dried for about 20 minutes using the hottest setting on the dryer. All non-washable clothing should be dry cleaned or placed in a sealed plastic bag for 14 days.
5. Vacuum the household thoroughly, especially carpets, furniture, floors and beds.
6. With your child, make a list of your child's close playmates. Notify the parents of those children to check for head lice.
7. Treat all affected persons exactly one week after the first treatment to kill any remaining lice or nits.
8. Examine hair of all household members for lice and nits every day for two weeks after the first treatment.

***The child may return to school after one treatment has been completed.**

TREATMENT PROCEDURE

- Use lice shampoo as directed on the label.
- Apply to wet hair.
- Work thoroughly into the hair according to the directions on the label.
- Rinse well with water to remove all shampoo and loosen the nits.

TO REMOVE NITS

- Pull off individual nits by grasping nits between the fingertips and sliding off the end hair strands.
- Place in bag and dispose, or
- Comb hair with fine-toothed (nit) comb, one small section at a time.
- Position comb as close as possible to the scalp and pull through to the end of the hair.
- Wipe nits from comb frequently using tissues and dispose of tissues in a plastic or paper bag; seal and discard.
- When hair is dry, check entire head for remaining nits.

Head lice shampoo and cream rinse contains insecticide, which can be dangerous if used incorrectly, therefore...

- They should not be used more often than recommended on a package insert.
- Avoid getting the cream rinse or shampoo in the eyes and the mouth because it can cause irritation.
- They should be applied to the head only. To avoid getting the cream rinse or shampoo on other parts of the body, do not apply or rinse out while showering or bathing.
- They should not be applied to the head after taking a hot bath or shower.
- The person applying the cream rinse, or shampoo should avoid using unnecessary contact with it, since it can be absorbed through the skin. Breast feeding or pregnant women should avoid contact by wearing rubber gloves.

Important things to remember about head lice:

- They do not cause or carry disease.
- They can be easily treated.
- Knowledge can help control their spread.