



## HEAD LICE

Head lice live only on people — not on animals. They are spread by direct head-to-head contact or by sharing objects such as hats, combs, pillows, or headphones.

Children may not show early signs of head lice. Later, they may scratch their head, run a low fever, be irritable, or have red patches on the scalp or neck. The child's scratching can cause skin conditions such as impetigo.

Head lice are usually dark tan, brown, or black and are very small. (As small as this dot . ) Look for yellow, silver, or light brown "nits" (eggs) attached to the hair near the scalp. Nits are very hard to pull off the hair.

If your child has lice, the entire family should be checked for lice. Then, treat only those who have lice. Call your child's doctor, the health department, or a pharmacist, and ask about special shampoos for head lice. Do not use these shampoos on infants. Do not use them if you are pregnant or nursing. Nits should be removed by using a special comb.

Lice and nits can live on clothing, beds, or other items. Soak all washable items in hot water for 10 minutes. Wash clothing, sheets, and towels in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.

Place non-washable items, such as stuffed toys, in a tightly sealed plastic bag for two weeks. Then open the bag outdoors and shake the toys thoroughly. Vacuum carpets and furniture carefully for several days to remove lice and nits. Anti-lice sprays are not recommended since children can breathe in the fumes.

# Head Lice



Head lice live on a person's scalp and lay their eggs (nits) on the hair. Lice can cause itching and pain. Scratching can cause skin infections.

Anyone can get lice. You can get lice from another person if your hair touches their hair, if you share hats or hair brushes, or if your clothes touch.

To get rid of head lice:

- ✓ Ask a pharmacist about special shampoos to kill lice.
- ✓ Use a special comb to remove nits from hair.
- ✓ Wash clothes, blankets, and toys in hot water.
- ✓ Vacuum rugs and floors.

## SAVE THIS IMPORTANT NOTICE!

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Head lice (*Pediculosis capitis*) continues to be a problem in our community. Lice are highly communicable and difficult to prevent, but if every parent will take the responsibility to check the entire family often, these parasites can be controlled. This is often a frustrating problem to deal with, but the following information should help you to identify and treat head lice safely and thoroughly.

### HOW DO YOU GET HEAD LICE?

Many people associate lice with unclean people or homes. This is not true in the case of head lice. Frequent bathing or shampooing will not prevent lice nor eliminate them once they are established. Lice cannot jump or fly and are usually transmitted by contact with infested persons or wearing infested clothing or using infested combs or brushes. Children should therefore be warned against sharing hats, clothing or grooming aids with others. Household pets do not transmit lice.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Lice are small insects about the size of a sesame seed. They are usually light brown but can vary in color. They move quickly and shy away from the light, making them difficult to see. Diagnosis is more often made on the basis of finding nits (eggs). Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval specks attached to hair shafts. New evidence suggests that viable (live) nits may be found at any distance from the scalp. As she deposits her eggs (three to four times a day) the female louse cements them to the hair. Unlike lint or dandruff, they will not wash off or blow away. Nits may be found throughout the hair, but are most often located at the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and frequently on the crown. It helps to use a magnifying glass and natural light when looking for them.

## SYMPTOMS OF INFESTATION

Itching that occurs when lice bite and suck blood from the scalp is a primary symptom of infestation, although not everyone will experience the itching. Children seen scratching their heads frequently should be examined at once. Often there are red bite marks or scratch marks on the scalp and neck. In severe infestations a child may develop swollen glands in the neck or under the arms.

## TREATMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Before one family member is treated, all should be examined. Everyone showing evidence of infestation should be treated at the same time. Individual treatment is a TWO-STEP PROCESS involving the use of a pediculicidal product and a combing tool manufactured for the purpose of nit removal. Proceed as follows:

1. Remove child's shirt and provide a towel to cover the eyes. (This is essential.) DO NOT TREAT IN THE BATHTUB OR SHOWER, but have the child lean over a sink. (This confines the lice product to the scalp/neck.)
2. Use one of several louse remedies available at your pharmacy. Some are available by prescription, some over-the-counter. All these products must be used carefully, observing all safety guidelines. Also consider (1) consulting your obstetrician if you are pregnant or nursing (whether treating yourself or others); (2) consulting your physician before treating anyone with extensive cuts or scratches on the head or neck or ANYONE USING OTHER MEDICATIONS. DO NOT USE THESE PRODUCTS ON INFANTS. READ ALL PACKAGE INFORMATION BEFORE USING THESE PRODUCTS.
3. ALTHOUGH IT CAN TAKE TIME AND SOMETIMES BE DIFFICULT, REMOVE ALL NITS to insure complete treatment. Louse products do not kill all the nits, and survivors will hatch into crawling lice within 7 to 10 days, generating a cycle of self-re-infestation. Even dead nits will cling to the hair and cause uncertainty about re-infestation. Nit removal can be accomplished with a special combing tool manufactured for this purpose or by picking them out with the fingernails. NOTE: Some so-called lice combs are actually cradle cap combs and are ineffective against nits. Clean nits from the nit comb frequently with a tissue or old wet toothbrush. NOTE: Even if your lice comb fails as a nit removal tool it can be used to screen for adult lice and is particularly helpful for the person screening him or herself.
4. Following nit removal, have the child put on clean clothing.

5. A DAILY NIT CHECK is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment and then checking should become part of routine home hygiene. You may have to re-treat in 7 to 10 days if there is evidence of NEW nits or newly-hatched lice. (Regardless of precautions taken at home, re-infestation from others can still take place.) Treatment itself can cause itching; do not re-treat on the basis of itchiness alone.

#### TREATMENT OF PERSONAL ARTICLES:

1. Machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with the infested person during the last 10 days. Articles should be washed in HOT WATER 135°F and dried in a HOT DRYER for at least 20 minutes. Non-washables can be vacuumed, dry cleaned, or sealed up in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
2. Soak combs and brushes for 1 hour in a 2% Lysol solution or the pediculicide.
3. If clothing worn by the person with lice is stored with other clothing (i.e., coats in a closet) all clothing must be treated by 1 of the above methods.

#### HOME DISINFECTION:

1. Thoroughly vacuum mattress, carpets, upholstered furniture and car upholstery.
2. Damp wipe all surfaces to remove loose hair that may have attached nits. Dispose of cleaning cloth.
3. Fumigation or spraying has NOT been found more effective than vacuuming and raises the potential of needless insecticide exposure. In addition, it a costly practice.

#### REPORTING CASES:

Don't be embarrassed to notify your child's school or day care so other parents can be alerted to a possible outbreak. Also, notify your child's playmate's parents. Parental cooperation will help protect all children, including your own.

## EFFECTIVE COMBING

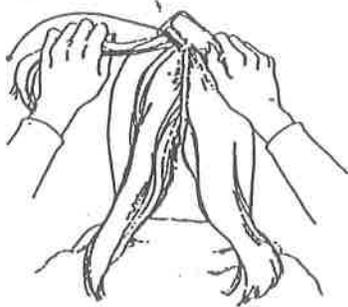
① While hair is still wet, comb with your regular comb to remove snarls and tangles. Part hair into four sections.



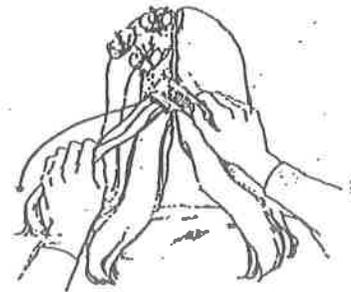
② Starting at the top of the head from any one of the four parted sections, lift a one-inch wide tuft of hair up and away from the scalp.



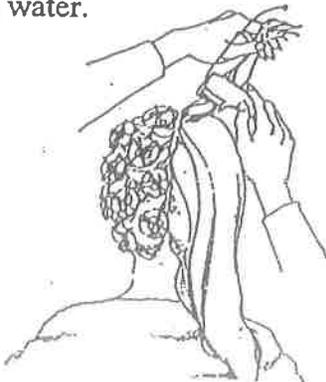
③ Take the special nit-removal comb in your other hand and place the teeth of the comb as close to the scalp as possible. Comb slowly away from the scalp to the end of the hair, being careful to comb the entire length of each one-inch section of hair.



④ Clip or pin back nit-free strands. Continue combing and pinning until the entire section is free of nits and lice. Wipe nits from the nit comb frequently with a tissue.



⑤ Repeat steps 2 through 4 for the remaining sections. Always comb away from the top of the head to prevent re-infestation of combed hair. This may take some time if hair is long and thick. If hair dries during combing, wet with water.



\* When entire head is combed, rinse thoroughly.

\* After hair is dry, recheck entire head for stray nits and comb out any remaining nits.

\* Soak comb in either the lice shampoo solution, Lysol solution or hot soapy water (130°F) for 10 minutes.

MASON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

307 8th STREET  
POINT PLEASANT, WEST VIRGINIA 25550  
PHONE: 304-675-4540

Mason County Schools attendance policy regarding contagious parasite diseases, such as lice is as follows:

- ❖ A child with lice or other parasite diseases shall be excused from school not to exceed two (2) days per incident.
- ❖ Beyond two (2) days, if the child does not return nit free, the absence will be unexcused.

Any questions pertaining to this policy should be directed to the school principal or the Attendance Director.