

## Does the household environment need to be treated?

- Routine cleaning of the child's environment, including washing recently used clothing, bedding and linens in hot water is recommended.
- Items that can not be washed should be sealed in plastic bags for **2 weeks**.
- Vacuum carpeting, upholstery and car seats.

**Remember:** Head lice can survive off a human host for up to 48 hours and nits will hatch within 7-10 days.

## What if I don't get rid of head lice after treatment?

Consult your pediatrician or inform the school clinic.

## How can the spread of head lice be stopped?

The key to successful eradication of a head lice infestation is to break their life cycle through proper treatment.

## Will I ever get rid of head lice?

Don't get discouraged! It takes time and **YES**, it will end. The main reasons for continued infestations are:

- Did not follow directions on the product.
- Did not remove all lice or nits.
- Did not treat the environment thoroughly.

**Remember:** Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or container of rinse treatment between those that are infested.

# Head Lice Treatment

*What Parents Need To Know!*



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Photo courtesy of the CDC

## What are head lice?

Head lice (*or Pediculosis*) are small, wingless parasitic insects approximately 1/8 of an inch long (about the size of a sesame seed) that live on the scalp. Head lice are very quick and use a hook-like claw to stay attached to the hair.

## What are nits?

Female lice lay eggs called nits that are whitish, oval sacs approximately 1/16 of an inch long (about the size of a pin head). The nits are attached to the hair shaft by a cement-like substance that makes them difficult to remove. The life cycle of head lice is approximately 30 days during which time each female louse can lay up to 7-10 nits a day.



## Who gets head lice?

**ANYONE** can get head lice! It is most common in pre-school and elementary school-aged children (ages 3-12) and females. Kids are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school.

## How are head lice spread?

- **DIRECT** contact with an infested person.
- **INDIRECT** contact with personal belongings of an infested person such as brushes, combs, clothing, bedding, upholstered furniture and car interiors, all of which temporarily harbor lice.

## What are symptoms of head lice?

- **ITCHING AND SCRATCHING** usually on the back of the scalp and neck and behind the ears.
- **SORES ON THE HEAD** caused by scratching.
- **VISIBLE** lice or nits.

### Remember: NITS STICK ON THE HAIR.

Some children may have no symptoms. Don't confuse dirt or dandruff with nits.

## Who should I notify if my child has head lice?

- **Pediatrician**
- **School Clinic**
- **Playmates and close friends outside of school**

## Should all family members be treated?

- **ALL** family members residing with an infested person should be examined for the presence of head lice.
- Treat **ANY** family member with a head lice infestation.

### Exceptions:

Children under two years of age or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding **should not** use an anti-pediculosis product.

Persons with chronic illness or the elderly should consult their physician.

## What is the treatment for head lice?

- **USE AN FDA APPROVED**, over-the-counter anti-pediculosis product. Prescription products are also available.
- **READ THE INSTRUCTIONS** before using any product and follow **ALL** instructions.
- **COMB HAIR** with a fine-tooth nit comb to remove lice and nits.
- **DISINFECT** all combs and brushes before using again by immersing them in hot water greater than 130 degrees or soaking in anti-pediculosis shampoo for 1 hour.
- **CHECK YOUR CHILD'S HAIR DAILY**. Manually remove nits for 2 weeks following the initial treatment.
- **RETREAT** your child 8-10 days after initial treatment.
- **CONTINUE** to check your child's head weekly for at least 4 weeks.



## There is **NO** proof that the following treatments work:

- Vinegar
- Compounds that claim to dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal"
- Mayonnaise
- Olive Oil
- Tea Tree Oil
- Lotions that claim to "suffocate" lice
- Petroleum jelly
- Other household chemicals, including: kerosene, gasoline, paint thinners and turpentine

**If you have questions regarding treatment for head lice, please contact your pediatrician or your local health department.**