

# What Should I DO If My Child Gets Head Lice? General Steps To Do

## Facts About Head Lice-What Are They?

- Head Lice are yellowish-white insects that live on the human scalp.
- Lice don't have wings, and they cannot fly, hop or jump.
- Head lice are about 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch long. Lice are as big as a sesame seed.
- Head lice are difficult to see because they are so small and move very quickly.
- Itching of the scalp may be the first sign of head lice.
- Most often, what you will see are the oval eggs (nits) which have been laid by the lice.
- The eggs are laid close to the scalp (eggs farther than ½ inch from the scalp is probably already hatched or dead.)
- The nits are off white in color and are attached to the hair by a cement-like substance.
- Lice do not cause disease; they are more of a nuisance.

## How Do You Get It?

- Lice are passed from direct personal contact (head-to-head contact or combs, hats, or coats.)
- Lice are not passed in swimming pools and you cannot get them from pets.

## Who Gets Them?

- Lice can live on any person's head – regardless of age, income, social status or cleanliness.
- All household members and other close contacts should be checked, and those with evidence of a live infestation should also be treated at the same time.

## What Do I Do? Follow these steps to get rid of head lice:

- Apply a lice-killing hair product (shampoo or crème rinse.) **Follow the labeling instructions on proper use of lice medication.**
- Remove the nits.
- Clean the house.

## How To Apply the Lice-Killing Hair Product (Shampoo or Crème Rinse) Correctly:

- Only treat the hair of people who have head lice or nits.
- Buy the lice-killing hair product from the grocery or drugstore or your healthcare provider.
- Apply the hair product exactly according to the package directions. The label will tell you either on dry or wet hair.
- Cover the hair completely with the hair product. (Long hair may require 2 bottles).
- Leave the lice-killing hair product on the correct length of time. Use a watch or timer.
- DON'T rewash hair for 1-2 days after treatment!

## How to Remove the Nits:

- Work under a good light (sunlight, a strong lamp, or magnifying light.)
- Divide and fasten the hair in sections, working each section separately.
- Look through each section of hair for nit
- Remove the nits by pulling down the length of the hair with your fingernails. Put the nits in a trash bag and throw them away.
- A metal lice comb may help.
- It takes time to remove nits. It may take several hours.
- Nit removal is crucial to eliminate further infestations of lice. All nits must be removed from the hair to guarantee successful treatment of lice.

## How to Clean the Home:

- Wash all bedding, towels and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for twenty (20) minutes.
- Non-washable items (such as stuffed animals or wool coats (can be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for two (2) weeks.

- If unable to wash clothes or bag items for two (2) weeks, they can be put in the dryer for twenty (20) minutes on high heat.
- Vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, mattresses, benches, car seats and anything else the child's head may have touched.
- Soak combs, brushes and hair ornaments in lice killing shampoo or a quart of water with 1 ½ T of Lysol for 1 hour, followed by washing in hot soapy water.
- Wash all hard surfaces with hot soapy water (floors, tables, chairs, etc.)
- You do not need to have a pest control company spray your home.
- Do Not Use Lice Sprays-are not effective and can irritate asthma or respiratory conditions.

### **Follow Up Steps:**

- Check everyone's hair daily for at least 7 – 10 days.
- After 7 – 10 days if there are still nits or lice; use the lice-killing hair product again.
- If more lice or nits are found, you will have to remove the nits and clean the home again in addition to treating the hair again.
- Call your doctor about head lice treatment:
  - If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
  - For children under two (2) years of age.
  - If the skin of the scalp is broken or infected.
  - If there are lice in the eyebrows or eyelashes.
  - If the head lice continue after two (2) treatments with the lice-killing hair product.

### **Reminders:**

- Lice are passed by direct personal contact.
- Do not over-treat the hair; follow the directions on the head lice product exactly.
- Only treat the hair of persons who have head lice or nits.
- Home remedies like mayonnaise, olive oil and petroleum jelly are not recommended.
  - Alternative treatments have been tried to asphyxiate lice, these treatments are only successful IF the hair is saturated generously, and covered with plastic wrap or shower cap for a minimum of 4 hours. Rinse out with warm water and shampoo. Comb/pick out all nits since this treatment does NOT kill eggs-you must remove them.
- Do not use kerosene or gasoline.
- Do not shave the head.
- Itching may continue for a week or two (2) after treatment, because the lice-killing hair products dry the scalp.
- Check for lice often during the school year.

### **Remember:**

- Lice do not cause disease, but it will take time and work to get rid of them.
- To decrease your child's risk of transmission
  - Teach your child NOT to share combs, hats, coats, headphones, hair ornaments, etc.
  - At school, have them put their hats inside coat sleeves and keep gym clothes and towels in separate boxes.
- Do not treat the infested person more than 3 times with the same medicine-if still infected, see your healthcare provider.
- Do not mix head lice drugs.
- For additional information contact your school nurse at ext. 8031, your healthcare provider or local health department.

### **Resources to go to:**

- Wisconsin Division of Public Health, Disease Fact Sheet, Pediculosis (head lice infestation) and Centers of Disease Control/General Head Lice information at [www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen\\_info/faqs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html)