

Head Lice Fact Sheet

Head lice are small insects:

1. They live on the hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes of humans where they feed and lay eggs. Eggs take about 7 - 10 days, and may be up to 14 days to hatch. To live, adult lice need to feed on blood. If the lice fall off a person, then they will die within 2 days. The adults' lifespan is approximately one month, and eggs can survive on clothing for a month.
2. Nits are tiny grayish-white eggs attached to hairs close to the scalp with a cement-like substance. Nits are a sign of head lice. Nits cannot be washed or brushed out like dandruff.

You can get head lice:

1. Close contact with a person with head lice, like touching heads.
2. Using combs, brushes, towels, bedding, caps, wigs, ribbons, coats, or by close contact of these items at home, school, church, or other public places.
3. Lying on carpets, beds, cloth chairs, sofas, or car seats used by a person with head lice.

Facts about head lice:

1. They do not jump...do not fly...do not live on pets...Lice do crawl and move quickly.
2. Lice that have fallen off or been brushed off a person will die in 48 - 55 hours.
3. Female lice lay 4 to 6 eggs per day (100 - 150 eggs/life of louse).
4. Lice will die if exposed to extremes in temperature about or below 87°F for long periods.

What to do:

1. Check all members of the household and close contacts for head lice and nits. Only those with live lice, or viable nits within 1/4 inch should be treated. Very close contacts, e.g., those sharing a bed, should be checked daily for a week and treated if appropriate.
2. Good "over-the-counter" treatments can be bought. You may wish to talk to your doctor. Both "over-the-counter" and prescription medicines effectively kill lice, but may not kill all nits. You may need to treat again in 7 - 10 days so newly hatched lice will be killed. Follow directions for re-treatment on the box.
3. Remove all clothing and wash right away. Apply treatment while person is in a bath or shower. Follow the directions on the label. After treatment, dry with a clean towel and put on clean clothing.
4. All nits should be removed especially those that are close to the scalp.
5. All persons with lice should be treated at the same time and close contacts should be screened daily for a week.
6.
 - a. Clean all articles that might have lice or nits - combs, brushes, etc. by washing with lice-killing shampoo, soaking in 2% Lysol for one (1) hour, or washing in hot soapy water for 5 - 10 minutes at 125°F. Two (2) minutes in a microwave oven will destroy nits and lice on microwave safe articles. Stuffed toys and large things should be sealed in a plastic bag for 10 days and kept in a cool place, below 70°F.
 - b. Towels, bed linens, hats, coats, and scarves should be dry cleaned or washed in hot soapy water. Dry in a dryer for at least 20 minutes on a hot setting or iron on a hot setting to destroy the nits.
 - c. Vacuum rugs, car seats, sofas, and beds. Throw away the vacuum bag.
 - d. All nits must be removed.
7. If shampooing several persons, gloves should be worn.

Helpful methods to assist in the removal of nits after treatment:

--Nit picking is the most difficult part of the treatment--

1. A metal fine tooth comb on wet hair is best.
2. A hot hair dryer helps loosen nits.
3. If there are no scratches or open areas, warm white vinegar combed through the hair may help loosen nits.
4. Pick nits off the hair shaft with fingers or tweezers.

To prevent getting head lice again:

1. Treatment may be repeated in one (1) week. Call your doctor if treatment is for a child under two years of age or treatment has not worked after two (2) tries.
2. Call parents/legal guardians of your child's closest friends. Call your child's school. Call those in charge of activities with direct contacts, e.g., wrestling, sports, dancing classes, etc.
3. TELL YOUR CHILD NOT TO SHARE CAPS, COMBS, BRUSHES, etc.

Return to school after proof of proper treatment:

1. Children with visible live lice or nits located within one-fourth (1/4) inch or closer to the scalp will be excluded from school until the first treatment is completed. These students will also be excluded from bus transportation until they are rechecked by health services personnel as being free of live lice and nits attached within one-fourth (1/4) inch or closer at the scalp.
2. **CHILD MUST BE FREE OF LIVE LICE AND ALL NITS CLOSE TO THE SCALP (within one-fourth inch of scalp).**
3. Child **MUST** be checked by school health staff **BEFORE** school entrance.