

## HEADLICE FACT AND TREATMENT PROTOCOL

- Head lice do not hop, jump, or fly. They only crawl.
- Lice are wingless creatures with 6 legs with claws at the end, size of a sesame seed, and range from grayish white to light brown in color.
- Diagnosis of head lice is more often made by finding lice eggs, called nits, which are found within ½-inch from the scalp (oval eggs attached at an angle on the hair shaft and don't come off easily). If you can blow or flick a nit off, it is not a nit.
- Lice live about 30 days and lay about 6 eggs/day and cement these eggs (nits) on hair shafts. It takes 8-10 days for nits to hatch, and then another 8-10 days for nits to mature to lice.
- Head lice like clean heads the most. You can get lice from being near another's head with head lice, using infested earphones, hats, combs, or brushes.
- There is no evidence that lice transmit any disease. Pets do not carry head lice.
- The most common symptom of a head lice infestation is itching, primarily at the base of the neck, behind the ears, and at the crown of the head. The itching is caused by an allergic reaction to the saliva that head lice inject into the scalp to keep the bite from closing. People who are not allergic to the saliva, do not itch at all. Other people continue to itch even after the lice have been eliminated. So, remember, you can have head lice and not itch at all.
- Check all family members and be sure to tell anyone who may have been exposed. Doing this will help prevent your child from becoming re-infested.
- Check your child's head at least once a week.
- Do not send your child on the bus upon return to school. It is important to provide a ride, because the nurse will need to recheck your child's hair before he or she can return to class.
- Lice are not life threatening. The National Pediculosis Association reports that head lice have recently become resistant to pediculocides. Be prepared to take additional steps to get rid of this problem.
- See suggested treatment on back of this page.

## FOUR STEP BATTLE PLAN

1. USE A PEDICULOCIDE. **Always read and follow the label carefully.** If there are any cuts or abrasions on the scalp, do not use. Never use a pediculocide on an infant or anyone pregnant or breastfeeding. Shampoo over the sink, not the tub or shower. You may apply a second application of the pediculocide 8 to 10 days later to be sure all nits have been killed, but if two treatments do not get rid of the lice, do not apply another OTC product to your child's scalp. The lice may be resistant to the product. Instead, you may want to call your doctor. He or she may recommend another type of treatment.
2. OLIVE OIL TREATMENT. Olive oil smothers any lice that survive the pediculocide. Olive oil smothers and kills active head lice. It makes nit removal easier and re-moisturizes the scalp after the pediculocide. Part the hair and apply oil directly on scalp. Massage and saturate scalp. Leave oil on for 8 hours. Cover hair with shower cap and tie in place with a bandana. If you wash oil off too soon, lice can come back to life. They can hold their breath for several hours. Thus, it is important to leave the oil on for 8 hours. Then comb through and remove any lice and nits.
3. CLEAN ENVIRONMENT. Don't worry about turning your house upside-down in an effort to get rid of lice. Such efforts are unnecessary. Lice depend on human blood to survive and typically die within 24 hours without a host. Lice may, however, get caught in a hairbrush, comb or headband, so wash hair care items and accessories in hot water (130°F). Likewise, lice may be trapped, for example, when towel-drying hair. Towels used after showers or washing the hair are one of the most likely places to find lice. Launder recently used clothes, towels and bedding materials in hot water (130°F) or tumble in a dryer on high heat. If your child sleeps with a special stuffed animal or blanket, wash it in hot water (130°F), too, or place in a dryer on high heat. You don't need to place stuffed animals in plastic bags for several weeks. Routine cleaning is sufficient. Vacuum rugs, carpets, chairs and couches, pillows, bed mattresses, car seats. Wash coats, scarves, hats and mittens, washable rugs, sheets, blankets, and pillowcases. Off the head, adult lice usually cannot survive for more than a day or two. Nits off the hair will die within hours of hatching if they cannot find a meal, so, there is no point in cleaning every nook and cranny. Pets do not carry human head lice and do not need any special treatment. Evidence shows that lice sprays are not effective in killing lice or nits. NEVER spray your furniture, beds or carpets with bug spray.
4. COMB OUT THE NITS. **THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY IN LICE TREATMENT IS NIT PICKING.** If lice show up again after you treat, it is usually because nits or newly hatched lice were not removed. This happens often because some of the lice are so small they can only be seen under a microscope. Part out thin sections of hair (no wider than the comb). If you find a nit, grasp nit with your thumb and forefinger fingernails and deposit onto a tissue. Pin back each section of hair after removing the nits. After picking all the lice and nits you can see, rinse the hair with water to wash out any loose nits. **PICK THE NITS TWICE A DAY FOR TWO WEEKS, EVEN IF YOU DO NOT SEE NITS! IF YOU DO NOT PICK NITS REGULARLY, NOTHING ELSE YOU DO WILL WORK!**

