

# Parent Information Handout



## HEAD LICE

### What are Head Lice?

Lice are parasites, little insects that live only on human scalp and hair. Away from the scalp, lice can survive only 1 – 2 days. Head lice are harmless, however may cause extreme itching. The female louse attaches approximately 60 – 150 eggs (nits) to the hair shaft near the scalp with a cement-like substance. The average life span of each louse if untreated is 30 days.

### How are they spread?

Head lice are spread by direct contact with an infested person or indirectly by sharing clothing, bedding, combs, brushes, upholstered furniture in home and car etc. Lice cannot jump or fly; they are only capable of crawling. Lice and nits are responsible for transmission from one person to another.

### Where are they found?

Nits (eggs) are most commonly detected at the crown of the head, behind the ears and at the nap of the neck. Nits firmly attach to the hair shaft, close to the scalp and are very difficult to remove due to the cement like substance they produce. Dandruff, hair sprays etc., are commonly seen during examination (careful attention needs to be made to avoid misdiagnosis due to the similarities in appearance). Nits are difficult to remove from the hair shaft. Dandruff is easily flaked away from the hair shaft. A bright light or sunlight helps to visualize the nits.

### Recommended Treatment

1. Use a medicated shampoo or cream rinse that your Health Care Provider recommends. Apply the solution following the directions and consult a physician before treating infants, pregnant or nursing women, or people with extensive cuts or scratches.
2. In addition to using the medicated shampoo or cream rinse, you can also use a white vinegar and water rinse. A 50/50 solution has been found to loosen the nits and aid in their removal. After the treatment a fine tooth stainless, steel comb should be used to remove the nits, working from the scalp outward. All nits need to be removed before your child returns to school.
3. Check for nits daily for the next 10-14 days, Repeat treatment as directed by product information.
4. Put on clean clothes. Clothing, bedding and cloth toys can be disinfected by machine washing or drying using hot cycles.
5. Dry cleaning, or storing articles in plastic bags for 10 days is also effective.
6. Disinfect combs and brushes by soaking in hot water for 10 minutes. You may choose to wash them with the chosen lice removal solution.
7. All carpets, sofas, chairs and interior of cars must be vacuumed and the vacuum bag must be tied tightly and thrown away.
8. Family members must be instructed on the importance of using only their own comb, brush, hat, coat, etc.