

Lice

Some important facts and tools that will help you detect and combat lice.

What are head lice?

- Head lice are tiny (like sesame seeds), wingless, bloodsucking insects that feed on the human scalp.
- They do not infest animals.
- They cannot live away from the human host for longer than 20 hours in our climate.
- They do not fly or jump, but crawl at high speed.
- They infest people regardless of social and ethnic status.
- They are not an indication of poor hygiene or parental neglect.

Where do head lice come from?

- Head lice crawl from one head to another.
- The most common method of transfer is by direct head contact between two children.
- Transfer also occurs through shared combs, brushes, hats and other headgear or clothing. (Explain to your children that they should not exchange head gear, combs, etc.)

How do you know if your child has head lice?

- Examine your child weekly to catch an infestation as early as possible.
- Use bright light to examine your child's head.
- Work in small areas (about 1"), parting the hair with a comb, to look for eggs attached to the hair near the scalp. Because lice travel so quickly, you are less likely to find the lice themselves.
- If you observe your child scratching his/her head, that is a sign of possible infestation--check for lice!

How do I end head lice infestation?

- **KILL THE LICE.** Lice killing products are available from your pharmacy or physician. These products will kill lice and most eggs. Be sure to follow directions and reapply per directions to ensure complete effectiveness.
- **REMOVE ALL EGGS.** The most important step in ending lice infestation is to remove the eggs that survive lice-killing treatments (up to 30% of all eggs). **THESE EGGS WILL HATCH AND CAUSE RE-INFESTATION UNLESS THEY ARE REMOVED.**
- **CLEAN HOUSE.** The brushes and combs your child have used within the last week will need to be soaked in the pediculicide shampoo for one hour. Bedding, clothing, and hats must be laundered in very hot water on the same day your child's hair is treated. As a precaution, stuffed animals, pillows, or other items that cannot be washed should be placed inside a plastic bag and sealed for 2 weeks. Thorough vacuuming of carpeted floors is necessary.