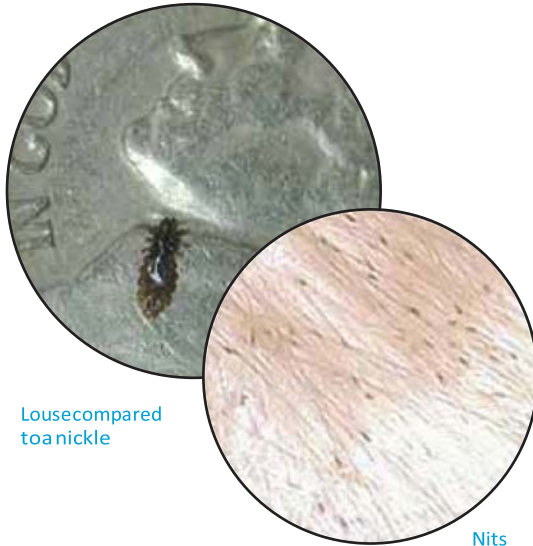


# HEAD LICE



What do you do if your child is sent home from school with head lice? It can happen to anyone and often does.

According to the Bio-Integral Resource Center, head lice affect over six million children (more than 10 percent of the elementary school population) every year. Your solution should include IPM strategies to safely and effectively eliminate these pesky infestations. IPM is Integrated Pest Management, a method that focuses on prevention and least toxic interventions.

Head lice are tiny insects that thrive on the warmth, food and the moisture a scalp provides. The adult is about the size of a sesame seed and their eggs, called nits, are

about the size of a pinhead. The nits can be found at the base of the hair shaft. Head lice spend their entire life on the human head. While they are irritating, they pose no known health risks. Because of this, the American Academy of Pediatrics revised their guidelines and now recommend that no healthy child should be excluded from or miss school because of head lice, and no-nit policies for return to school should be abandoned. For more information visit this website <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/july2610studies.htm>

Head lice are not caused by poor hygiene and do not "jump" from one person to another. They can be transferred between people who share items such as hats, hairbrushes and combs. They can also walk from one child's head to another if their heads come into contact. Head lice are easily transmitted in schools and childcare centers where children have close contact, so children in these situations should be inspected weekly for active lice. **A head lice infestation cannot be prevented by any type of pretreatment. Schools where students have head lice should not be sprayed! This will have absolutely no effect on head lice since they can only live on heads, and can be brought in on a continuous basis by other children. Spraying the school will needlessly expose children to pesticide residues.**

## Six Steps for Treating Head Lice Safely

Combing is a safe, non-toxic and effective method of lice control. Use a metal lice comb specially designed for lice and nit removal to help remove nits. See Web site <http://www.headlice.org/licemeister/index.htm> for more information.

1. Find a well-lit area and seat the child just below eye level.
2. Cover the hair with any type of salad oil. Remove tangles with a regular hair comb. You can also use hair conditioner to help pull the comb through the hair.



3. Separate a mass of hair about the width of the metal lice comb. It is important to separate the hair into small sections so you can more easily see lice and nits.
4. Hold the mass of hair with one hand. Insert the lice comb as close to the scalp as possible and gently pull the comb slowly through the hair several times. Check the hair carefully. After combing each section, dip the comb in a bowl with a solution of soapy water and use a tissue to remove lice and debris. Make sure the comb is clean before you use it on the hair again. Continue combing one section at a time and check each section again. If hair is long, pin it up in a curl, flat against the head.
5. After combing, flush the contents of the bowl down the toilet. Shampoo the hair at least twice to remove the oil. When the hair is dry, check for stray nits and remove those hairs individually with a pair of small, pointed scissors. It is VERY important to remove all nits.
6. Boil the metal comb for 15 minutes in water only. Use an old toothbrush to clean the comb. The comb can now be used on another family member.

### Removing Head Lice Safely from Items in the Home

Although head lice live on their host, it is possible for head lice to become dislodged while people sleep or while removing clothes such as hats. Therefore, it is recommended that bedding, towels and recently worn clothing are frequently washed while you are treating your child - it does not have to be done daily. Head lice cannot survive off of the host for more than 1-2 days.

1. Wash bed linens, towels, hats and recently worn clothes in a washing machine. Dry in a dryer on the hottest setting for both lice and nits. Items like stuffed animals, pillows, hats that are not washable can be dry-cleaned or stored in bags for two weeks.



hot, soapy water in 20 minutes to kill headphones and tightly sealed plastic

2. Family combs and brushes should soak for at least 10 minutes in hot water. If they don't already have them, it might be a good time to get every member of the home their own comb and brush. Tell your child not to share these items with others.
3. If you are concerned about other areas of the house, you can vacuum carpets, car seats and overstuffed furniture. It is not recommended that you use insecticidal sprays on these items.