

## Head Lice Information

- Mahomet-Seymour Head Lice Procedures
- FAQ's
- Helpful information if someone in your home has head lice.



## **MAHOMET-SEYMOUR SCHOOLS UPDATED HEADLICE PROCEDURES**

**Evidence based practices from Illinois Department of Public Health, Center for Disease Control and American Pediatric Association recommendations include:**

- In home screening of family members and close contacts
- No regular screenings or rechecks in schools
- No notification of classmate parents (if there are multiple cases in one classroom the principal will determine if all students need checked)
- Notification of parent (of affected child) at the end of the day by phone or note indicating that prompt, proper treatment is in the best interest of the child and his/her classmates

**Outdated practices no longer recommended:**

- Classroom wide screening if one student has head lice
- Notes home to parents of classmates
- Immediate exclusion for infestation
- Nit-free policies

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Head lice (*pediculus humanus capitis*) are a nuisance but they have not been shown to spread disease. Research has shown that head lice do not survive for longer than 1 day when not on the head, and the eggs only hatch when they are incubated by body heat near the scalp.

Transmission occurs primarily through prolonged head to head contact and infrequently through indirect contact with shared personal belongings. Contrary to popular belief, lice do not jump from one host to another, they crawl.

### **IDENTIFICATION**

- Adult lice are gray, about 1/16 inch long.
- Nits are the lice eggs. Many nits are more than ¼ inch from the scalp and are usually not viable and very unlikely to hatch or may in fact be empty ‘casings’.
- Nits are cemented to the hair shaft and are unlikely to be transferred to other people.
- If a child is discovered to have live lice they typically have had it for more than 1 month, and do not pose a significant risk to others. Therefore, they should NOT be removed from the classroom.

### **TEACHER/SCHOOL RESPONSE**

- If a teacher, teaching assistant, or other staff observe live lice on a student, they notify the principal, who will alert parents, and If appropriate, will send treatment information with the student at the end of the school day. Include [IDPH Head Lice Fact Sheet](#) .
- The student remains in the classroom and is NOT excluded from activities.
- Students are NOT rechecked by school staff.
- Teaching staff will not administer any type of treatment or put a child’s hair up.
- Just as with any other sensitive information, teaching staff will not talk about a child having lice in the classroom with other children present
- In chronic cases, the administrator will determine if further intervention is required

## **HOME TREATMENT**

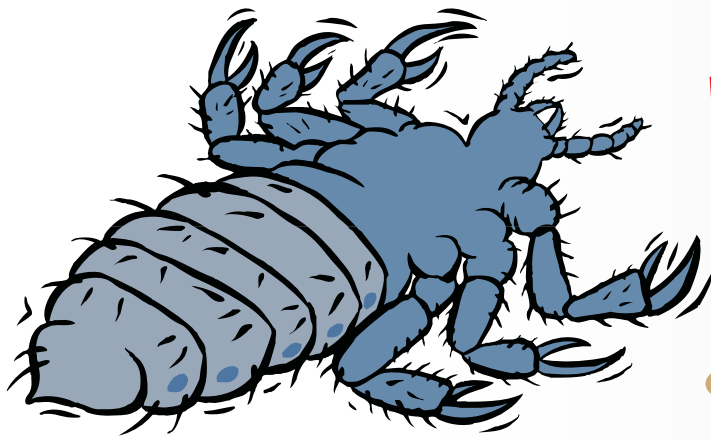
- Shampoos containing Permethrin 1% (Recommended by AAP). Apply per package directions (may need to be reapplied 7-10 days later).
- Remove all nits from hair with nit comb or by picking them out one at a time.
- Wash all clothes and bed linen in hot water, then dry on a hot cycle for 20 minutes.
- Dry clean items that cannot be washed or seal in plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Everyday cleaning methods are sufficient, there is no need for special chemical treatment (Pesticide Research Institute)
- Boil combs, brushes, hair bands and barrettes for 5 minutes.
- Check all members of the family and treat as needed. (Do not treat if lice are not present)

Some children may develop a resistant strain of head lice and require a more concentrated effort from a physician.

Since lice cannot live on family pets, pets should not be treated.

## **PREVENTION**

- The use of combs, brushes or other grooming aids belonging to other persons should be discouraged.
- Individuals should not share caps, other headwear or clothing, especially coats or sweaters.
- Parents should be encouraged to examine their children's hair periodically for nits.
- Cloakroom hooks should be individually assigned and spaced so clothing does not touch. If this is not feasible, outerwear can be placed in plastic or paper bags and hung



# HEAD LICE

## - Fast Facts & Treatments -

### **DID YOU KNOW:**

- Lice cannot fly or jump from one thing to another. Lice can only crawl.
- Lice infestation rates are the same for people with long and short hair.
- Animals cannot have human lice. Animals are not a source of human lice.
- Lice infestations can happen to anyone. Lice infestations are not a result of personal hygiene practices.

### **What Are Head Lice?**

Head lice are small parasitic insects that live on a person's scalp.

### **What Are The Symptoms Of Head Lice?**

The most common symptoms of head lice are tickling feelings on one's head, and itching especially behind the ears and at the bottom of the neck.

### **What Do Lice Look Like?**

Lice tend to be confused with dandruff. They are small white / gray parasites that are found near the scalp.

### **How Are Lice Spread?**

Lice can be spread through direct and indirect contact with a person who has head lice. Lice can be transferred through carpet, clothing (baseball hats, scarves and helmets), sharing of infested hair brushes or combs, bedding, towels or even shower caps.

### **How Are Lice Infestations Treated?**

- The best and most effective way to treat head lice is to use an over the counter (ex. Nix) or prescription remedy that is effective in treating head lice. It is important to note that infants and pregnant women should consult a doctor before using these medications.
- Along with treating one's scalp, an infested person should also rid their fabrics of lice. Lice can be killed by exposure to high temperatures (above 125°F) for 10 minutes. This can be done by washing clothes in hot water or drying in a dryer set on high for at least 20 minutes.
- Non-washable fabric can also be placed in a plastic bag for a minimum of 10 days.
- Combs and brushes can be placed in a pan of hot water on the stove (150°F) for 10 minutes.
- Floors should be thoroughly vacuumed along with car seats.

For more information on head lice, please contact the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217-782-4977 or <http://www.idph.state.il.us/public/hb/hblice.htm>



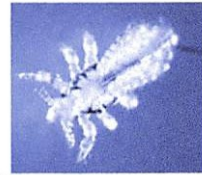
**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Champaign-Urbana Public Health District

[www.c-uphd.org](http://www.c-uphd.org)

## **Important Head Lice Information for Parents**

Please do not panic! **Anyone** can get head lice. Head lice are very common among school children because they like to share items and they want to be close to other people. There is a lot of information in this packet that may seem overwhelming at first. Please take time to read the information carefully as it will help you get rid of the lice more easily.



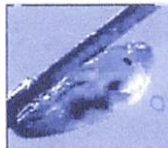
(Mature Louse)

### **What are Head Lice?**

Head lice are bloodsucking insects that live only on human s. They have been around since the beginning of time. They do not come from the dust or air.

Head lice come from head lice.

- **Head lice do not hop, jump, or fly.** They are wingless bugs about the size of a sesame seed or smaller.  
They have six legs with tiny claws and live only on human scalps. They range in color from light brown to gray.
- Head lice are contagious, after prolonged contact (more than just a few minutes) with another person who has them. The female louse crawls onto a child's head, either from the head of another child or from infected clothes, brushes or furniture. The female begins laying eggs, or nits, with a glue that firmly attaches the nits to hair shafts. That single female lo use can lay 6-10 nits a day; nits hatch within about a week and begin feeding on human blood.

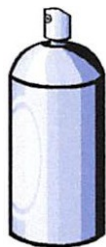


(Nit)

- Nits, or eggs, attach to one side of the hair shaft at an angle. They are white to light gray in color and do not come off easily.
- Head lice can live away from a human head for up to 48 hours.
- A hatched nit needs a human blood meal within 45 minutes to survive.
- A louse live s on a head for approximately 30 days.
- Signs and symptoms of head lice are itching around the ears, back of neck and crown of head.

### **Head Lice Facts**

- Head lice are not considered a disease and do not carry diseases.
- The occurrence of head lice is no different in persons with long hair versus those with short hair.
- **It does not matter to head lice if you are poor, rich, old, young, male, female, black, white, clean or dirty.** They will and do infest anyone.
- Frequent bathing and hair washing is no guarantee against getting head lice.
- Pets do not give head lice to humans and human s do not give head lice to pets.



## **Treatment of Head Lice**

The treatment of head lice is a four-step process: kill live lice, check for nits and remove them by comb or by hand, treat family members, and treat household.

**1) Kill live lice.** A medicated shampoo is needed to kill live lice. Check with a pharmacist or your physician about the many over-the-counter medicated shampoos and prescription shampoos. Check with your physician or pharmacist about new treatments that use natural ingredients and not chemical pesticides. Natural products such as "Lice-freee and Lice Arrest have been reported to be effective.

- Lice shampoos often do not kill all nits and surviving eggs will hatch in 7-10 days. Therefore, a second shampoo treatment is needed in 7-10 days.

Do not use a medicated shampoo in the bathtub or shower stall because it can hurt the exposed skin of the body. It is recommended that you shampoo the scalp over the sink.

- If sores or open areas are present to scalp, consult your doctor.
- Using more medicated shampoo or leaving it on the hair for a longer time does **not** increase the chance of removing head lice, but it might be harmful to your child.

Olive oil may be used at the same time or in addition to the shampoos to treat head lice. It smothers and kills live head lice. It is harmless and easy to apply. It makes nit removal easier and re-moisturizes the scalp after using a medicated shampoo. It may be used over and over again without hurting the child. A vinegar water rinse also helps loosen nits to make them more easily removed from the hair shaft.

Do not use a creme rinse or combination shampoo/conditioner before using lice medication. Do not re-wash hair for 1-2 days after treatment.

- If child has extra-long hair, you may need to use an extra bottle of the medicated shampoo. Do not treat head lice over and over again with the same medication, if it does not seem to work, call your doctor. Medicated shampoos may be irritating to the scalp and may cause dandruff and brittle hair that breaks easily.

**2) Check for nits and remove all of them with a comb or by hand.** Nits, or eggs, are attached to one side of a hair shaft at an angle. They are white to light gray in color and do not come off easily. Check for nits in bright light, daylight is best. Sit near a window or shine a bright light towards the head. If you have trouble seeing, get someone to help.

- Nits usually come off the hair shaft easier if the hair is slightly damp. For longer hair, part the hair into small sections and look for lice and nits section by section.
- If you can blow or flick it off, it is not a nit, and most likely lint or dandruff.

Adding conditioner, olive oil or white vinegar and water solution may help loosen the nits and make combing easier. Mayonnaise, butter and Vaseline are smothering agents, but difficult to get out of hair, especially Vaseline. Children often do not like the smell of butter and mayonnaise and both of these can turn sour and cause problems if children suck on their hair.

- **Total removal of nits is the only guarantee for being lice-free.** A person is considered louse free if nit free for 10-12 days in a row.
- As a parent you need to check for and remove nits. Removing every single nit takes a long time, but it is the only way we know for sure that the lice are gone.
- If your child has been exposed, check their head every day for 2 weeks because it often takes about a week before symptoms appear.

**3) Treating family members.** Once lice are found, everyone in the household should be carefully checked for lice and all who have it should be treated **at the same time** to avoid getting it again.

If family members do not have lice, they should not be treated unless lice or nits are found.

Using the head lice medication will not stop a person from getting lice.

- Recheck all family members that were treated for 2-3 weeks until you are sure all lice and nits are gone.
- It is impossible to check yourself for lice; please have another adult check you.
- It is important for you to contact any person that you or your child has been around to let them know about the head lice. It may be hard to do, but it is only fair that they know, so that they can check themselves and get treatment if they needed.

**4) Cleaning home and environment.** (See below)



**Safety Warnings**

- Always read and follow label directions for safe use of any lice treatment medicine.
- **Do not** use extra amounts of lice medication.
- **Do not** mix different head lice medications together.
- Store lice treatment medicine like any chemical and **keep out of reach of children.**
- **Do not** use lice medication if you are pregnant, nursing, have allergies or asthma, if you have open wounds or sores on the scalp, or have a seizure disorder without talking with your doctor.
- **Do not** use Kwell or products that contain Lindane, which contains an ingredient that may cause serious side effects like seizures and death.
- **Do not** use pet flea or tick treatments, fly spray, insecticide surface spray or kerosene or gasoline.
- **Do not** use aerosol sprays for furniture and carpet. They can be toxic if inhaled.
- **Never** use lice chemicals on or near the eyes. If lice are found in this area, talk to your doctor.
- **Do not** use lice treatment medicine on children under two years of age.

## **Household Treatment**

- Machine wash all clothing, hats, personal items and bed linens of the infested person in very hot water (at least 130 degrees), and then dry in very hot dryer for a minimum of 20 minutes.
- To ensure that the water temperature is hot, allow time between loads of laundry for water to reheat.
- Vacuum all carpeting, furniture, mattresses, pillows, car upholstery, headphones, car seats, bike or sports helmets, stuffed toys or anything that may have been in contact with the infested head.
- Thorough vacuuming is adequate cleaning; sprays are not necessary. Throw vacuum bag away after use.
- Place in a plastic bag for two weeks any clothing, stuffed animals, and comforters that cannot be washed or dry cleaned.
- Soak combs and brushes for one hour in rubbing alcohol, Lysol or wash with soap and hot water (130 degrees F).
- There is no need to have pest control come and spray the house.

## **Persistent Head Lice**

Persistent head lice, or head lice that does not seem to go away, is defined as three incidents of live lice found over a six-week period. Persistent head lice may be caused by several factors.

1. Improper use of medication. Either the shampoo was not left on hair for the right length of time or it was not reapplied 7-10 days later.
2. **Not enough time spent combing and removing the nits.** (This is the main reason for re-occurrence)
3. Not treating other family members with lice at the same time.
4. Improper cleaning of household and linens. (**Everything** must be washed in HOT water or vacuumed).
5. The head lice medicine you are using may not be working and the head lice may be resistant to that medicine.

## **Prevention**

- Do not share combs, brushes, hats, coats, scarves, towels, headphones or anything that comes in contact with the head, neck or shoulders.
- Students should have separate storage space at school for hats, coats, and book-bags.
- Encourage students with long hair to keep it tied up or braided to decrease the chance of getting head lice.



## **Expenses**

Treating head lice can be very expensive, especially if it is persistent. Expenses include medication, doctor's visits, dry-cleaning, time spent on treatment, and missed work and lost wages for parents. If you are having trouble with the expenses of treating head lice, please call the school social worker.



### **Emotions**

Having a child with head lice will be very frustrating and exhausting for the parents and the child. The affected child will often become embarrassed about what other children will think. Society associates head lice with poverty and poor personal hygiene, which is not the case. Remember that **anyone** can experience the unpleasant task of having to deal with head lice. Having a child come home with head lice does not mean you are a bad parent. It does mean that there is a lot of work ahead of you.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Kari Tsukuno, RN  
Mahomet-Seymour District Nurse Coordinator  
(217) 586-5833 x 2631  
[ktsukuno@ms.k12.il.us](mailto:ktsukuno@ms.k12.il.us)