

Howard Gardner Multiple Intelligence Charter School

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD COMES HOME WITH HEAD LICE:

Don't panic. Don't blame. Anyone—adult or youngster—can get head lice. Head lice are passed from person to person by direct contact or on shared objects (pillows, combs, hats, towels, etc.). It has nothing to do with cleanliness and does not reflect on you as a parent. The problem is easily managed. Just follow the instructions below:

1. Check every member of the family.

Look for tiny silvery egg sacs (nits) on hair shafts, near the scalp, especially at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Head lice are small brownish-gray insects without wings. Any family member with lice or nits must be treated.

2. Head lice treatment.

A two step process involving

- 1) the use of a medicated pediculicidal product and
- 2) combing out all nits. Proceed as follows:

- a. Remove the child's shirt and provide a towel to cover the eyes. (This is essential.) Do not treat in the bathtub or shower, but have the child lean over the sink (this confines the lice product to the scalp/neck).

- b. Use one of several louse remedies (pediculicidal products) available at your pharmacy. Some are available by prescription, some over the counter. All these products must be used carefully, observing all safety guidelines. Also consider:

(1) consulting your obstetrician if you are pregnant or nursing (whether treating yourself or others); (2) consulting your physician before treating anyone with extensive cuts or scratches on the head or neck, or anyone using other medications. **DO NOT USE THESE PRODUCTS ON INFANTS.* DO READ ALL PACKAGE INFORMATION BEFORE USING THESE PRODUCTS.** AVOID PERSONAL LICE SPRAYS.**

- c. Although it can take time and sometimes be difficult, "nitpicking" or removing all nits will ensure complete treatment. Louse products do not kill all the nits, and survivors will hatch into crawling lice within 7-10 days, generating a cycle of self-reinfestation. Even dead nits will cling to the hair and cause uncertainty about reinfestation. Nit removal can be accomplished with a special metal combing tool manufactured for this purpose or by picking them out with fingernails.

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Note: Nit combing is best accomplished with hair that is dry or slightly damp. Discard nits into plastic bags and seal them for disposal.

3. Following nit removal, have the child put on clean clothing.
4. A daily nit check is advisable for at least 10 days following treatment and then check should become part of routine home hygiene. You may have to retreat in 7-10 days if there is evidence of new nits or newly hatched lice. (Regardless of precautions taken at home, reinfestation from others can still take place.) Treatment itself can cause itching; do not treat it again based on itchiness alone.

TREATMENT OF PERSONAL ARTICLES AND ENVIRONMENT

1. Machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with the infested person during the last three days. Use hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Non-washables such as stuffed animals, sleeping bags, headphones, helmets, etc. can be vacuumed, dry cleaned, or stored in tightly sealed plastic bags at room temperature for two weeks.
2. Vacuum everywhere. Rugs, upholstered furniture, and mattresses, even car seats should be carefully vacuumed to pick up any living lice or nits attached to fallen hairs. Discard the vacuum bag into a sealed plastic bag for disposal. The use of insecticidal sprays is not recommended and strongly discouraged as it may be harmful to family members and pets and is of questionable benefit.
3. Soak combs, brushes, etc. in hot water for 5-10 minutes. Also soak hair barrettes, ribbons, headbands, etc.

REPORTING CASES

Don't be embarrassed to notify your child's school (daycare, camp, etc.) so other parents can be alerted to a possible outbreak. Also, notify your child's playmate's parents. Parental cooperation will help protect all children including your own.

WHEN CHILDREN CAN RETURN TO SCHOOL

Children with head lice are to be kept out of school until treated and **nit-free**. Before your child's return to school, the school nurse will assist in rechecking him/her before allowing them to return to the classroom.

* Lice/nits on infants should be removed manually. ** Package directions for prescription NIX suggest it is not necessary to remove nits. The Health Department recommends nit removal following treatment with all products.