

Head Lice and/or Nits Advice

Head Lice and/or Nits General Information

The life cycle of head lice occur in three stages. The first stage involves head lice eggs. Eggs are attached to the hairs individually by the female and are commonly known as “nits”. A nit adheres to hairs stubbornly by adhesive substances secreted by the female. This nit “glue” is very resistant to mechanical and chemical removal. Eggs that are likely to hatch are usually located within ¼ inch of the scalp and will hatch in about one week (range 6-9 days). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a study in May of 2001, which showed only nine of 50 children with nits alone (18%) converted to “live lice”. If a nit hatches this is known as the nymph stage. The nymph stage lasts about 7-10 days. The final stage is when the nymphs mature into adult lice. This stage is where body growth stops and sexual maturation occurs. A female can continue to produce eggs for the duration of her life, which is about 30 days. She can lay about 3-4 eggs daily during this period, this totaling over 150 eggs being laid during a 30 day period.

How Do They Spread?

- Direct Contact-Head to head contact
- Indirect Contact-Sharing combs, brushes, scarves, hats, coats, “dress-up” clothes, headphones, stuffed animals, and shared surfaces, like sleeping mats.

The True Facts of Head Lice

- Head Lice do not transmit disease.
- A hair permanent will not get rid of head lice.
- Commercial hair dryers do not get hot enough to kill head lice. If temperatures hot enough to kill head lice were produced, extreme discomfort or burns would result.
- Hair Spray will not prevent you from getting head lice.
- Hairdressings (Vaseline, baby oils, etc.) will not prevent head lice and/or nit attachment.
- Vaseline rinses do not control head lice.
- Home remedies such as bleach, kerosene, and coal oil, do not work as head lice treatment. Caution: these products are not safe to use and are not approved for head lice treatment.
- Keeping hair short does not prevent you from getting head lice. Studies have indicated that long hair is not more likely to be infested than short hair.
- A hair cut will not get rid of head lice. Lice treatment products should be used. People with short hair can have lice too.
- Head lice infestation is not related to poor hygiene. Head lice may be present at all socioeconomic levels.
- Head lice do not hop, jump, or fly. Live have claws that cling to the hair shaft.
- The home or school does not need to be sprayed, dusted, or otherwise treated with insecticides. Lice do not hide in call crevices and floor cracks like cockroaches or other household pests. Thoroughly vacuuming is adequate.
- Pets do not give head lice to humans. A pet shampoo is not an effective treatment for head lice.

Screening Process

Equipment and Supplies Needed:

- Applicator stick or tongue depressor or long tailed (rat tailed) comb.
- Strong source of natural light, high intensity lamp, or strong flashlight.
- Magnifying glass with a light source or reading glasses if needed.

Screening Steps:

- Begin by separating the hair into small sections.
- Using a natural light or high intensity lamp and magnifying glass if needed, examine the hair behind the ears, back of the neck, and scalp for crawling lice or attached nits.
- If not lice or nits are found in these areas, continue to inspect the rest of the head.

Things to Know:

- Live lice are about the size of a sesame seed, usually brown and move quickly away from light.
- Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval eggs firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft.
- Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris such as dandruff, hair spray, or dry scalp. These items can be removed from the hair easily.
- Nits adhere firmly to the hair shaft and require manual removal with lice comb or your finger.

Common Treatment Problem:

- Often people do not follow the directions **exactly** (for example some products must be applied to dry hair) as written on the product label.
- Often people re-treat the head because nits are still present after the first treatment. **There is currently no head lice medication that have proven to gets rid of nits.** A nit comb or fingernails must remove them immediately after treatment. Re-treat no sooner than 7 days and only if live lice are seen or if product directions advise it.
- Often people treat the head repeatedly to prevent head lice. When lice is not present, repeated treatment can lead to scalp irritation. If overused, some products can be poisonous or may cause lice to become drug resistant.
- Often the children continue to scratch his/her head after treatment, even though free of lice or nits. All head lice medication cause drying and irritation of the scalp, which can lead to itching and flaking of the scalp.
- Often hair spray and dry scalp can be mistaken for nits. Dry scalp will removed when touched. Hair spray can be washed out. Nits will cling to the hair shaft. After a thorough shampooing, check head.
- Not completely treating the home and household items.