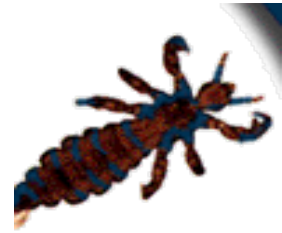


## Head Lice (Pediculosis capitis)

Head lice are a common nuisance among school age children. They can affect anyone and have nothing to do with family income, social status or level of personal hygiene. They do not transmit disease and are not a serious medical condition.



Head lice are spread primarily through direct physical contact, i.e. head to head, sleepovers, or using the comb, brush, hats etc. of an infected person. They do not fly, jump or swim and are not found on pets.

A head louse is approximately 1/16 inch long and grayish brown in color so may be very difficult to see. They move quickly, especially when exposed to light. They prefer living on the scalp, at the nape of the neck and behind the ears where it is warmer. This is also where you may find nits. Good lighting and a magnifying glass are recommended.

Nits (eggs) are attached to the hair shaft by a sticky substance that cannot be shaken off or flicked away. The nits are easy to identify. They have a teardrop shape and are usually found within ¼ inch of the scalp in an active case. No lice shampoo kills all lice eggs, **so manual removal is critical** to prevent re-infestation.

### What you can do:

- Inspect your child's hair and scalp frequently.
- Teach your child not to share personal items i.e. brushes, combs, etc.
- Encourage each family member to use only their assigned brush.
- Notify the school nurse or teacher if you find lice/nits on your child.

### Home treatment:

Head lice should be treated with shampoos specifically labeled for head lice. Many of these shampoos are insecticides so should be used with caution in very young children and pregnant or nursing women. If your child has asthma or allergies, please consult with your physician.

- Follow the Instructions on the shampoo **carefully and completely**.
- Retreat 7-9 days later because the shampoo does not kill all the eggs.
- Spend time daily removing the nits by either using a fine tooth comb or gently sliding your finger nails all the way down the hair shaft.
- Wash all linens, towels, or clothing that the child has been in contact with in the last 3 days with hot water. Place in dryer on high heat for at least 30 minutes. **Anti-lice spray or fumigation of the house is unnecessary.**
- Bag for two weeks, dry clean, or place in the freezer for 24 hours any items that cannot be washed.
- Vacuum all living areas including the car upholstery.
- Soak brushes and combs in anti-lice shampoo or boiling water.

**Check frequently. Treat quickly. Call your School Nurse for more info.**

### Resources:

Care Technology Inc/Health promotion of Ed.  
Instructions for Pediatric Patients Schmitt, 1999  
Michigan Head Lice Manual 7/04