

How to Detect and Treat Head Lice

To Parents:

If your child has come home with head lice, don't panic. Millions of school children contract head lice each year. Children play in close contact with each other. A simple exchange of hats, clothing, brushes, combs, pillows, and other personal articles can result in transmission of head lice from one child to another.

Lice can be easily and effectively treated. Your doctor may prescribe either a creme rinse or shampoo to kill lice and their eggs (nits). By following your doctor's instructions and the advice below, you can more effectively detect and prevent head lice in a family member.

1. INSPECT

EXAMINE HEADS



Carefully examine hair and scalps of all family members for lice and their eggs. Lice are small grayish-tan, wingless insects. Lice lay eggs called nits.

DETECT NITS



Nits are firmly attached to the hair shafts, close to the scalp. Nits are much easier to see and detect than lice. They are small white specks which are usually found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears.

2. TREAT

USE A PEDICULICIDE



Once head lice and/or nits are found, your doctor may prescribe a medicine called a pediculicide. If your doctor prescribes a creme rinse, follow the instructions on the bottle label. One application is sufficient for creme rinse. Some shampoos may require repeated applications.

USE NIT COMB



After hair has dried thoroughly, the nits may be removed with a special nit comb. Combing to remove the nits is not necessary after using the creme rinse and some shampoos, but may be done for cosmetic or other reasons. Some schools have a "no nit" policy which prevents children from returning to school until examination of their hair and scalps reveals no nits.

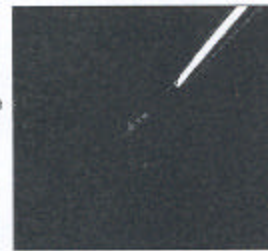
3. CLEAN UP ENVIRONMENT

WASH



Lice are easily spread from one person to another. Make sure persons with head lice do not share articles (combs, brushes, towels, hats, scarves, pillows, etc.) that have come in contact with their heads, necks or shoulders. Use hot water to wash lice-exposed clothes, towels, and bed linens. Soak combs and brushes in hot water for 10 minutes. Dry-clean hats and clothing that cannot be washed (or seal in a plastic bag for at least two weeks).

VACUUM



Vacuum carpets, upholstery, pillows, and mattresses which may have been exposed to persons with head lice.

Public health officials believe the incidence of head lice infestation is on the rise. If one child's infestation is overlooked, the stage is set for transmission to the community.

Parents: Be on the lookout for signs and symptoms indicating that your child has contracted head lice. The most common symptom is intense itching on the back of the neck and head. If you observe your child scratching excessively in this area, check his/her head for nits and lice. If head lice or nits are found, contact your physician.