

Help With Head Lice

From the desk

Lisa Witzke RN

Head lice are small insects that like to live on human heads. They are about one tenth of an inch long. Since they have no wings they do not fly. On a person's head, they move by grasping onto hair shafts. They can move quickly but they cannot jump. They are spread from one person to another by direct contact. These lice lay eggs on the hair shaft near the scalp and usually prefer the area along the nape of the neck and behind the ears. When checking for lice, this is the area to look. What you are looking for is a tiny white-grey sesame seed sized nit (the name given to lice eggs) that is glued to the hair shaft. It won't move if you try to flick it off the hair.

If you find these nits, then head lice are present and the person should be treated with a medicated shampoo to kill the live lice. Ask your pharmacist for advice on the different brands available. Please exclude any affected children from activities with other children (school, parties, sports, etc.) until the lice have been eliminated. Be sure to inform and/or check any family members or friends that the child has been near recently. The child must be nit free before returning to school. **Look closely for nits and remove them** by pinching them between your finger and thumb to pull them from the hair. Place them in a plastic bag for disposal. Nit combs are not effective in removing nits from fine hair. Depending on the combs will leave many nits intact on the hair shaft.

Once the child has been treated with a shampoo and nits are removed take these steps to help assure they do not return.

1. **Wash** all bed linens, towels, and clothing (include hats, coats, ribbons) in hot water. Dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.
2. **Clean** brushes, combs, and hair articles in hot soapy water and pediculocide (a small amount of the shampoo) for 10 minutes.
3. **Vacuum** all furniture, carpets, rugs, and car seats.
4. **Place** things that can't be washed, such as stuffed animals, in a plastic bag and seal it for two weeks.

Examine your child's head as a part of normal routine hygiene. **Continue to check for more nits for at least two weeks after having treated your child for lice.** Follow the instructions of any product you use carefully. Do not over treat. These are pesticides and should be used with caution. To find more information, do a search on the Internet for "pediculosis".

After you treat your child and clean the home, we need to check your child before they may return to the classroom. You must drive your child to the high school clinic where someone will check for any remaining nits. Please call the high school clinic at 740-4706 and make an appointment for the head check. They may not return to class or ride the bus unless the nurse clears them as nit free.

We realize this is a long tedious process, but with your help, we will be able to get your child back into the classroom as soon as possible

If you have questions please call one of our Health Care Coordinators:
Lisa Witzke at 740-4706