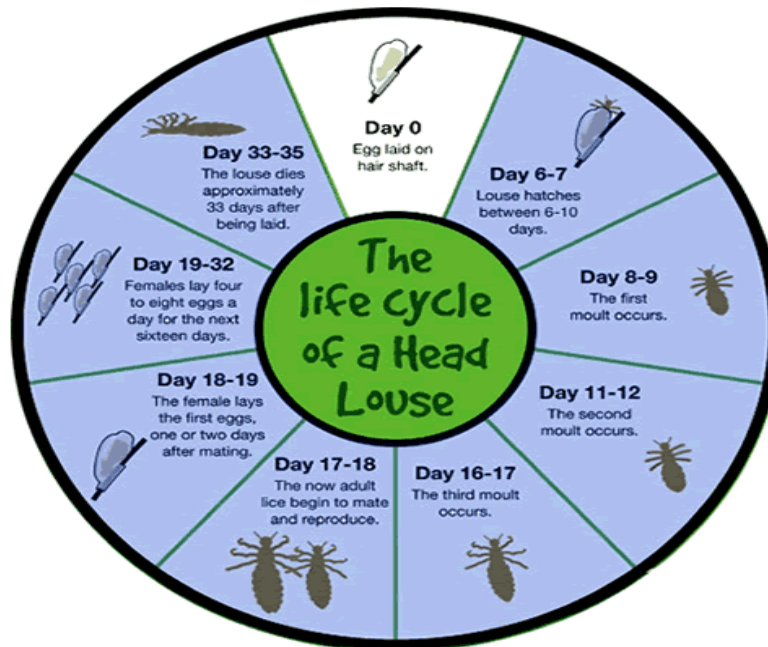


# HEAD LICE



This information was developed for parents/guardians to use as a guide in management of children with head lice. Please contact the District Nurse with questions at 920-648-2338, ext. 427

Lice are small insects about the size of a sesame seed. They are usually light brown but can vary in color. They move quickly and shy away from the light, making them difficult to see. Diagnosis is more often made on the basis of finding nits (eggs). Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval specks attached to hair shafts. As the louse deposits the eggs (3-4 per day), the female louse cements them to the hairs unlike lint or dandruff, they will not wash off or blow away. Nits can be found throughout the hair, but are most often located at the nape of the neck, behind the ears, and frequently on the crown. It helps to use a magnifying glass and natural light when looking for them.

Many people associate lice with unclean people or homes. This is not true in the case of head lice. Frequent bathing and shampooing will not prevent lice nor eliminate them once they are established. Lice cannot jump or fly, and are usually transmitted by close contact with an infested person or by wearing infested clothing or using an infested hairbrush. Children should therefore be warned against sharing hats, clothing or hairbrushes with others. Household pets do not transmit lice.

## REDUCING THE RISK OF GETTING HEAD LICE

- **DO NOT** share combs, brushes, hair bows/bands, helmets or headphones.
- **DO NOT** trade hats, scarves, coats or sweaters.
- **DO NOT** attend a sleepover if you have lice.
- **DO** wash your combs and brushes often.
- **DO** inspect your child's head regularly especially before and after a group activity such as birthday parties and sleepovers.
- **DO** check children who are scratching their heads frequently.
- **DO** vacuum upholstered furniture, rugs and floors frequently.
- **DO** change bedding frequently.
- **DO** bring your own pillow/sleeping bag to sleepovers.
- **DO** notify the school immediately each and every time you suspect a family member has head lice. Also notify any groups, neighbors, friends, playmates, or daycares that have been in contact with members of your family that have head lice.

## SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENT

The itching that occurs when lice bite and suck blood from the scalp is the primary symptom of infestation, although not everyone will experience the itching. Children seen scratching their heads frequently should be examined at once. Often red bite marks or scratch marks can be seen on the scalp and neck. In severe infestations, a child may develop swollen glands in the neck or under the arms. Before one family member is treated, all should be examined. Those showing evidence of infestation should all be treated at the same time.

A 3-STEP treatment plan is recommended for successful elimination and control. \*\*The main reason for treatment failure (and re-infestation of head lice) is the incomplete removal of lice eggs.

### **Step 1: Kill the lice**

**Option A-** Use an over-the-counter lice killing shampoo. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist for product recommendation or with any questions. These products are toxic. Read the directions carefully and closely follow the manufactures detailed instructions. Be careful around the eyes. Do not re-wash hair for 1-2 days after treatment per product instructions. Do not reapply pediculicide treatment for 7-10 days and then, only if live lice are detected. These products contain pesticide. Do not treat pets. Do not treat family members who are not infested. Do not use these products on pregnant or nursing mothers, infants, or if you have epilepsy. Wash towels immediately after treatment.

\*\*Because these products are only 80% effective, you should follow up in 4 days with an olive oil treatment (see option B below) every 4 days for a total of 6 treatments in a 21 day period. This will cover the life cycle of the louse.

**Option B-** Use an oil treatment alternative instead of the pediculocidal product. Many oils such as Crisco, Vaseline, or mayonnaise can be used. However, Olive Oil appears to be the most effective. Olive oil suffocates live lice and is a safe, non-toxic treatment. Oil treatments should be used every 4 days for a total of 6 treatments in a 21 day cycle to coincide with the life cycle of a louse.

#### **Oil Treatment Procedure:**

1. Saturate hair/scalp with oil and leave on for 8 hours. Cover head with a hat or shower cap.
2. After 8 hours- comb out all nits and dead lice.
3. Shampoo oil out of hair- Dawn dish soap works well.
4. Carefully check the hair every day and remove nits (eggs). Repeat oil application in 4 days.

### **Step 2: Remove The Eggs/Nits**

Egg (nit) removal is crucial to ending infestation regardless of the treatment option used.

1. Manually remove nits using a nit comb under good lighting. Fine-toothed metal nit combs (Derbac or Lice Meister) work best. Fingernails can be used to remove nits on individual hair strands.
  2. Divide hair in sections and thoroughly comb out the nits.
  3. Clean the comb with hot water and dry with paper towel in between sections.
- \*\*\* Check the head daily for three weeks and continue to remove any nits.

### **Step 3: Environmental Cleaning**

1. Following nit removal, have the child put on clean clothing. Change and wash all bed linens immediately.
2. Machine wash all washable items which have been in contact with the infested person during the last three days. Articles should be washed in HOT water and dried in a HOT dryer. Non-washables can be put in a hot dryer only for 20 minutes if heat will not harm them. Things which cannot be washed or dried can be sealed in a plastic bag for 14 days, or dry cleaned. Include helmets, headphones, sleeping bags, stuffed animals, hair bows.
3. Combs and brushes and headbands/clips can be soaked in lice killing product or 150 degree water for one hour.
4. Rugs, cars, floors, couches, upholstered chairs and mattresses should be carefully vacuumed to pick up any living lice or nits attached to fallen hairs. Immediately throw out vacuum bag.
5. Check all family members including you.

The school nurse or office staff will continue to screen your child for live lice and to monitor the process of nit removal. Please contact your health care provider if live lice persist after two treatments after following the above steps.