

HOW TO NIT-PICK

- Use a good light source (natural sunlight or a strong lamp), a magnifying glass and a good lice or nit comb.
- Comb or brush the hair to remove tangles.
- Wet hair facilitates the removal of live lice when combing.
- Section off the hair and work in one small area at a time (metal clips may be helpful).
- A metal comb is recommended.
- When a nit is found, carefully remove and dispose of it.
- It may be easier to identify and remove nits from dry hair.
- Continue to check daily for at least 2 weeks and regularly thereafter using a nit comb. (It is easy to miss a few nits.) Remember that the average lifespan of a louse is 30 days.
- If you continue to find live lice after treatment, contact your pediatrician or school nurse.

MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

- I do not need to worry about head lice because I have not received a notice. NOT TRUE!
- Boys do not get head lice. NOT TRUE!
- If I treat my own child's case of head lice properly, I do not need to notify others. NOT TRUE!
- I only need to check for head lice during the school year. NOT TRUE! (*Lice are transmitted whenever and wherever children gather.*)
- Children will always itch if they have head lice, so this will be my first clue. NOT TRUE! (*Some children never itch.*)
- Shampoo treatments kill all lice and their eggs. NOT TRUE! (*Some manufacturers claim this, but lice are becoming more resistant. Nitpicking is CRUCIAL*)
- Schools and buildings get head lice. NOT TRUE!
- You get head lice because you are dirty or have an unclean environment. NOT TRUE!
- I should treat my child with a lice shampoo as a preventive measure. NOT TRUE!

Frankowski, Barbara, MD, MPH, "Headlice", *Pediatrics*, Vol. 110, #3, Sept.2002.

*Please refer to the following websites
for additional information:*

www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html

www.headlice.org

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/paracites/headlice/default.html

NEEDHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

HEALTH SERVICES

HEAD LICE



*This pamphlet is designed to provide
parents/guardians with accurate and
current information about head lice.*

INCIDENCE AND GENERAL INFORMATION

“Head lice (Pediculosis capitis) infestation is common in the United States among children 3 to 12 years in age; approximately 6 to 12 million have infestations each year. Head lice are not a health hazard or a sign of uncleanliness and are not responsible for the spread of any disease. The most common symptom is itching. Individuals with head lice infestation may scratch the scalp to alleviate itching, and there rarely may be secondary bacterial skin infection.” (Frankowski, P.638)

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE

Louse: The adult louse, an insect, is 2mm to 3mm long (the size of a sesame seed) and is usually gray or brown, although color may vary.

- Lice do not hop or fly; they crawl.
- Lice move quickly and shy away from light, making them difficult to find.
- Lice need human blood to survive. They live by biting the scalp, which may cause itching.
- Lice **cannot** survive away from the human scalp for more than 24-48 hours.
- Lice cannot survive on household animals.

Life Cycle:

- The female louse lives up to 3-4 weeks and lays approximately 10 eggs, or nits, a day.
- Nits hatch in 8-14 days.
- Nymphs (young lice) mature in 9-12 days, then the female louse begins to reproduce.
- If not effectively treated, this cycle may repeat itself every three weeks.



Nits: Nits are tiny, shiny, pearly-colored eggs shaped like teardrops; occasionally they appear darker. They are attached to one side of the hair shaft at an angle.

- Nits are glued firmly to single strands of hair.
- Unlike dandruff or lint, nits cannot be easily dislodged; they will not wash off or blow away.
- Nits may be found at any distance from the scalp. Newly laid nits are usually found within 1/4” of the scalp.
- Nits may be found throughout the hair. They are commonly seen at the nape of the neck, around the ears and at the crown of the head.

PREVENTION

- Be aware of the signs and symptoms of head lice infestation.
- Check your child’s head at least once a week.
- Avoid sharing personal items that are in close contact with the head (i.e., combs, brushes, hats, helmets, hair accessories, pillows).
- Avoid head to head contact
- The center for disease control **does not recommend the use of lice sprays**. The Dept. of Public Health states that they can be harmful to people and animals.
- Notify the school nurse even if your child had lice over vacation.

TREATMENT

Person

- Contact your pediatrician or pharmacist for treatment recommendations.
- Use safe products that have been clinically tested.
- Be aware that over-the-counter products do not kill 100% of the lice and nits.
- **Follow the directions very carefully; read the warning labels.**
- Do not expose the entire body. Apply treatment over the sink, providing a towel to protect the eyes.
- **Do not reapply treatment more frequently than as recommended by the manufacturer.**
- After combing, remove any remaining lice and nits manually.
- Check all other household members; only those with live lice or nits close to the scalp should be treated.
- Use a piece of tape or fingers for catching live lice.

Environment

- Machine wash in hot water and regular detergent all clothing and bed linens that have been in contact with the infected person, or dry on the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- Items not washable, i.e. helmets, headphones, stuffed toys, pillows etc. should be stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Carefully vacuum carpets, floors, upholstered furniture and the car.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (130°) for 20 minutes or replace them.
- Notify anyone with whom your child has been in close contact to prevent spread to others and reinfestation.