

HEAD LICE

What are they?

- Wingless insects, size of sesame seeds, tan colored, move quickly by crawling
- Feed by sucking blood from human scalp
- Love warm, humid areas on scalp, esp. at nape of neck, behind ears
- Adult louse lives 30 days, can survive off scalp for 2 days

What are nits:

- Nits are the lice eggs, both live eggs and empty egg cases
- Adult female louse lays 3-6 nits/day, can lay 150 eggs in life span
- Oval-shaped, size of pinhead, white or yellow
- Are attached tightly to hair shaft, close to scalp by strong glue-like substance
- Hatch in 7-10 days into nymphs, mature into adults in 12-14 days

How are they spread?

- Lice live only on humans, spread by direct contact, i.e. children 's heads touching, sharing hats, helmets, clothing, combs, hair accessories, etc.
- Can also spread by contact with pillows, bed linens, stuffed animals

What to look for?

- Itchy scalp, tickly feeling, something moving in hair
- Irritated scalp, sores from scratching
- By the time these symptoms present child has probably had lice for a month
- Check scalp at nape of neck, behind ears, divide hair into sections and look under bright light

TREATING HEAD LICE

Non-pesticide products:

- LiceMD, (available at HEB, Walgreens) RID Pure Alternative, Licefree, LiceGuard
- Follow directions on label
- **These products can be used more frequently because they are pesticide-free**

Pesticide products:

- Pyrethrine with piperonyl butoxide (RID, A200, Triple X, Pronto, Walgreens' brand)
- Permethrin 1% (NIX, Walgreens' brand)
- These products work by destroying lice's nervous system, no effect on nits, so retreatment in 7-10 days is often needed to kill newly hatched lice
- Products are potentially toxic, need to be used exactly as directed, following instructions carefully is essential for successful treatment
- AAP recommends permethrin 1% products-less toxic, lower incident of allergic reactions
- Follow directions exactly for the product purchased
- After treatment comb hair out with nit comb, section by section
- Wipe nit comb off with paper towels after each pass through hair
- Wash all combs, brushes, towels in hot soapy water after each use

- Check head every day, section, comb through with nit comb looking for lice and/or nits
- If using RID or NIX, retreat as directed to kill newly hatched lice

Treating the environment:

- Wash bed linens, towels etc., in hot soapy water, dry in hot dryer
- Pillows in dryer on hot setting
- Put non-washable items in plastic bag for two weeks, then shake well outdoors
- Vacuum mattresses, carpet, upholstery, including car seats

These tips may help decrease chances of getting head lice:

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, etc., with others
- Pull long hair up and back at school
- Check hair weekly for lice, early detection helps to keep lice under control
- Some suggest using tea tree oil shampoo several times a week
- Using hair gel or spray may make it harder for lice to attach eggs to hair shaft

Websites:

www.headlice.org

www.prdiculosis.com