



head lice

Head lice are common in the community and outbreaks occur frequently. The presence of head lice does not reflect poor cleanliness or poor personal hygiene. Head lice infest the head hair. They cannot live away from a person for more than two days and they do not live on animals.

SPREAD

Head lice are spread from one person to another by direct head to head contact. School children are particularly susceptible because of the close contact they have with each other during school activities.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Lice are small greyish or brown creatures and 2 – 4 mm long. They have flat bodies and six legs. Lice can crawl but cannot jump or fly. They suck blood which causes itching of the scalp. The lice may be difficult to see. They lay greyish-white eggs 1 – 2 mm in size, which are called nits, on the hair shaft close to the scalp. The eggs hatch in about 7 – 10 days. The lice or their eggs are most often found behind the ears or at the back of the neck. The nits may look like dandruff but you cannot brush them out.

HOW TO CHECK FOR HEAD LICE

Separate the hair carefully with your fingers. Look through the entire head for adult lice or nits (eggs), especially behind the ears and at the back of the neck. Rash-like red marks may be visible on the scalp or just above the hair line at the back of the neck. Wash your hands after you have checked your child.

If your child has head lice, check all other family members.

TREATMENT

Use only one of the following treatment shampoos: Nix™, R&C shampoo™, Rid Clinic™ or A – 200 Pyrinate™. Carefully follow the treatment instructions on the bottle. Do not over use shampoo as overtreatment can be harmful.

CAUTION

For pregnant women, breast-feeding women and children under two years of age – the family physician or public health nurse should be consulted. Pregnant and breast-feeding women should wear rubber gloves when using the treatment product. Do not

get shampoo in the eyes, nose or mouth. If this happens wash the eyes, nose and mouth with lots of water.

REMOVAL OF EGGS (NITS)

The shampoo will kill the lice and some of the eggs but will not remove the eggs from the hair. If the nits are not removed, they may hatch and the cycle begins again. Remove the eggs from the hair with a very fine toothcomb or tweezers, or your thumb and finger. If using a fine toothed comb. Start 4 to 5 cm down the hair and comb towards the scalp.

CLEANING OF CLOTHING ETC.

- Wash hats, scarves, bed sheets and pillow covers. There is no need for any other special cleaning.
- Soak combs, brushes, hair ornaments, curlers and rollers in very hot water for 10 minutes.

READMISSION TO SCHOOL

Your regional Health Authority or the department that controls communicable disease within your region most likely will have a protocol in place for persons with head lice that must be undertaken before returning to school/daycare.

- Children with head lice should not return to school/day care until treated.
- Adults working as caregivers of children should not return to work until treated.
All family members who have nits or lice should be treated at the same time.
- Check for lice or nits every day for the next two weeks and periodically thereafter.

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