

Head Lice: An Itchy Situation



Head lice can be an uncomfortable problem for all involved. While the child diagnosed with the infestation is obviously itching, lice are NOT considered a disease nor do lice carry disease. They are merely a nuisance. Head lice occur in all socioeconomic groups and cultures and do not represent poor hygiene.

Spotting Head Lice

Close inspection with a magnifying glass will usually reveal lice nits or eggs, which appear as dandruff-like spots, white-gray in color. The lice themselves are more difficult to find. The eggs will be “glued” to the hair shaft most commonly at the nape of the neck and won’t easily come off. The scalp may appear irritated with redness and possibly scabs from the child scratching.

Treating Lice



Treatment is a special shampoo sold in most grocery/drug stores. Children under 2 years of age cannot use the shampoo for lice; mechanical removal is the only method.

- A nit comb usually is included with the shampoo and should be used for the most effective treatment.
- Home remedies, such as mayonnaise on the child’s head, are not proven effective.

Cleaning Your Child Care

- Using a vacuum is on the best way to rid areas of lice.
Consider vacuuming or laundering plush toys, bedding, upholstered furniture, draperies, and clothing
- Wash in hot water on a hot cycle or using a hot cycle in the dryer, at least 130° F for 20 minutes.
- Spraying of the area is **not** recommended.

Exclusion:

- Children should be excluded at the end of the day and until 1st treatment.

Talking Points for Parents

- Emphasize that no one is to blame; lice is commonly seen among young children.
- Discuss proper use of the lice treatment;
 - Children may need another treatment 7-10 days after 1st treatment to eliminate eggs that have hatched.
 - Using a nit comb to remove the lice is the most effective treatment.
- Give parents cleaning tips for their home to prevent further infestations.

Here are some things to remember to make everyone more comfortable:

- Remember that lice are not life-threatening; infected children may stay the day with precautions to prevent spreading lice to others.
- Prevention is easier than treating lice.
 - Do not share comb or hats
 - Separate children’s coats and bedding so they are not touching
 - Wash bedding/dress up clothes regularly
- Use responsible treatment methods to reduce everyone’s exposure to toxic pesticides.

Resources:

Download an exclusion/inclusion of ill children policy and other health and safety policies and forms from

www.iidc.indiana.edu/ecc/res-health.htm

Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools, AAP, 2005

American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org or 888-227-5409.

Indiana State Board of Health: Communicable Disease http://www.in.gov/isdh/healthinfo/quick_faqs.htm

*Information consistent with *Caring for Our Children 2002:* <http://nrc.uchsc.edu>

