

# **Head Lice Advice Packet**



## LICE CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

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\_\_\_\_ 1. Get the medication for lice from your doctor, clinic, or drugstore. (A Medical Card will cover the cost, with doctor's prescription.)

\_\_\_\_ 2. Carefully check all members of your family, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck. Look for red streaks from scratching. Treat only members who have lice/nits.

\_\_\_\_ 3. Treat head and scalp ONLY AS DIRECTED by manufacturer of the treatment you choose. Over-treatment may poison the person. The hair should be completely wet with medication.

\_\_\_\_ 4. Set the time for the length of time that the medication is to remain on the hair.

\_\_\_\_ 5. Rinse medication out of hair. Rinse with water and towel dry.

\_\_\_\_ 6. Do not use vinegar after using medication. Vinegar weakens the effect of the treatment.

\_\_\_\_ 7. Divide hair into sections. Then, with a very fine-tooth comb, comb through hair, pulling out all nits. Nits may need to be pulled out with fingers.

\_\_\_\_ 8. The best way to see the lice eggs or nits is in a very bright light. Sunlight is the best light. If you miss even one nit, it may hatch 90 to 150 eggs/nits.

\_\_\_\_ 9. Every morning (for ten days), before leaving for school, each child should be checked for redness of scalp, additional nits/eggs, or lice.

\_\_\_\_ 10. Teach your child not to share others' hats, scarves, coats, combs, brushes, etc.

\_\_\_\_ 11. Collect all bedding-sheets, pillows, pillowcases, and blankets-and machine wash items at hottest temperature (150 degrees).

\_\_\_\_ 12. After washing, put bedding into dryer at hottest-temperature setting for at least 20 minutes, or until dry.

\_\_\_\_ 13. Pillows and stuffed animals that cannot be washed must be put into a plastic bag, tied off, and left completely closed for at least 14 days.

\_\_\_\_ 14. Vacuum all rugs very thoroughly. Vacuum all couches, chairs, car headrests, car seats-anywhere that the back of someone's head might touch.

\_\_\_\_ 15. Throw away all plastic bags and vacuum bags after use.

\_\_\_\_ 16. All combs and brushes must be soaked in a disinfectant (disinfectant: one quart of water with one and one-half teaspoonfuls of Lysol or treatment solution) for 30 minutes or boil for 10 minutes.

## **Head Lice and/or Nits Advice**

### **Head Lice and/or Nits General Information**

The life cycle of head lice occurs in three stages. The first stage involves head lice eggs. Eggs are attached to hairs individually by the female and are commonly known as “nits.” A nit adheres to hairs stubbornly by adhesive substances secreted by the female. This nit “glue” is very resistant to mechanical and chemical removal. Eggs that are likely to hatch are usually located within 1/4 inch of the scalp and will hatch in about one week (range 6-9 days). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published a study in May of 2001, which showed only nine of 50 children with nits alone (18%) converted to “live” lice. If a nit hatches this is known as the nymph stage. The nymph stage lasts about 7 – 10 days. The final stage is when the nymphs mature into adult lice. This stage is where body growth stops and sexual maturation occurs. There are separate sexes in head lice and females must mate and be fertilized in order to produce viable eggs. This needs only to occur once. A mated female can continue to produce eggs for the duration of her life, which is about 30 days. She can lay about 3 – 4 eggs daily during this period, thus totaling over 150 eggs being laid during a 30 day period.

### **How Do They Spread?**

- Direct contact: Head to head contact
- Indirect contact: Sharing combs, brushes, scarves, hats, coats, “dress-up” clothes, headphones, stuffed animals, and shared surfaces, like sleeping mats.

### **The True Facts of Head Lice**

- Head Lice do not transmit disease
- A hair permanent will not get rid of head lice
- Commercial hair dryers do not get hot enough to kill head lice. If temperatures hot enough to kill head lice were produced, extreme discomfort or burns would result.
- Hair spray will not prevent you from getting head lice.
- Hairdressings (Vaseline, baby oil, etc.) will not prevent head lice and/or nit attachment.
- Vaseline rinses do not control head lice.
- Home remedies, such as bleach, kerosene, and coal oil, do not work as head lice treatments. Caution: these products are not safe to use and are not approved for head lice treatment.
- Keeping hair short does not prevent you from getting head lice. Studies have indicated that long hair is not more likely to be infested than short hair.
- A hair cut will not get rid of head lice. Lice treatment products should be used. People with short hair can have lice, too.
- Head lice infestation is not related to poor hygiene. Head lice may be present at all socioeconomic levels.
- Head lice do not hop, jump, or fly. Lice have claws that cling to the hair shaft.

- The home or school does not need to be sprayed, dusted, or otherwise treated with insecticides. Lice do not hide in wall crevices and floor cracks like cockroaches or other household pests. Vacuuming is adequate.
- Pets do not give head lice to humans. A pet shampoo is not an effective treatment for head lice.

## Screening Process

### Equipment and Supplies Needed:

- Applicator stick or tongue depressor or long tailed (rat tailed) comb
- Strong source of natural light, high intensity lamp, or strong flashlight
- Magnifying glass with a light source or reading glasses if possible

### Screening Steps:

- Begin by separating the hair into small sections.
- Using a natural light or high intensity lamp and magnifying glass if needed, examine the hair behind the ears, back of the neck and scalp for crawling lice or attached nits.
- If no lice or nits are found in these areas, continue to inspect the rest of the head.

### Things to Know:

- Live lice are about the size of a sesame seed, usually brown, and move quickly away from light.
- Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval eggs firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft.
- Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris such as dandruff, hair spray, dry scalp. These items can be removed from the hair easily.
- Nits adhere firmly to the hair shaft and require manual removal with lice comb or your fingernails.

### Common Treatment Problems:

- Often people do not follow the directions **exactly** (for example, some products must be applied to dry hair) as written on the product label
- Often people re-treat the head because nits are still present after first treatment. **There is no head lice medication that gets rid of nits.** A nit comb or fingernails must remove them immediately after treatment. Re-treat no sooner than 7 days and only if live lice are seen or if product directions advise it.
- Incorrectly following package directions. Products may not be completely effective if directions are not followed precisely.
- Often people treat the head repeatedly to prevent head lice. When lice are not present, repeated treatment can lead to scalp irritation. If overused, some products can be poisonous or may cause lice to become drug-resistant.
- Often the children continue to scratch his/her head after treatment, even though free of lice or nits. All head lice medications cause drying and irritation of the scalp, which can lead to itching and flaking of the scalp.
- Often hair spray and dry scalp can be mistaken for nits. Dry scalp will remove when touched. Hair spray can be washed out. Nits will cling to hair shaft. After a thorough shampooing, check head.
- Not completely treating the home and household items.

## **NIT CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Gather equipment: “rat tail” comb, pencil or pen, strong source of light (sunlight or high watt light bulb) or flashlight, magnifying glass or reading glasses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Have child sit comfortably in chair or on floor in front of you. With strong source of light carefully part child’s hair using a “rat tail” comb, pencil, or pen and examine hair for nits.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Begin by inspecting at the nape of the neck and behind the ears. If nothing is seen in these areas, continue to check the rest of the head to ensure there are no nits seen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. If nits found remove with fine toothed comb (nit comb) or it may be necessary to use your finger.