

A Letter from the School Health Office



Head lice

The entire class has had their heads checked for the presence of lice and students were referred for treatment as needed.

Please watch your child for the following symptoms:

- Please inspect your child's head for the possibility of head lice. Look for small silvery nits fixed to the hair shaft, similar in appearance to dandruff, but not easily removed.
- Where nits have hatched, live lice may be seen.
- If nits or lice are found, please call your healthcare provider regarding appropriate treatment. Your child should stay home from school until they have been treated.
- Follow the directions for any medication carefully. Cream rinse and conditioners can decrease the effectiveness of the treatment.

During the school year, it is a good idea to check you child's head weekly, or when he or she complains of having an "itchy" scalp. Talk to your child and remind him or her not to share or borrow combs, brushes, hats or scarves.

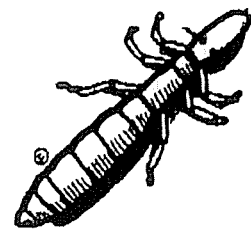
Please notify the School Health Office at the number below if your child is diagnosed with head lice.

Please call the school's Health Office if you have any questions or concerns.

LICE INFORMATION

PARENT INSTRUCTION SHEET FOR HEAD LICE

To Parents: If your child comes home with head lice, don't panic. Millions of school children contract head lice each year. Children play in close contact with each other. A simple exchange of hats, clothing, brushes, combs, and other personal articles can result in transmission of head lice from one child to another. Lice can be easily and effectively treated. You should ask your pharmacist for an effective head lice shampoo or ask your doctor for advice.



- ◆ Please send the box top from the head lice shampoo back to school with your child as proof of treatment, along with a short note describing the treatment.
- ◆ Check all members of the family for lice and their eggs. Lice are small grayish-tan wingless insects. Lice lay eggs called nits.
- ◆ Nits are firmly attached to the hair shafts, close to the scalp and are much easier to see than live lice. They are small white specks which are usually found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears.
- ◆ Apply the lice treatment to all infested family members, following instructions carefully.
- ◆ After shampooing, remove the nits with a fine tooth comb (nib combs come with some head lice shampoos). Application of warm water with vinegar (1:1) or clear warm water may help nit removal. Nits may need to be removed by using your fingernails or tweezers.
- ◆ Use hot water and detergent to wash sheets, pillowcases and clothing (at least 20 minutes).
- ◆ Hot dry or dry clean blankets, bedspreads, hats, and sleeping bags; or seal in a plastic trash bag for at least two weeks.

Treating Head Lice

How can I treat a head lice infestation?

The most important step in treating a head lice infestation is to treat the person and other family members with head lice with medication to kill the lice. Wash clothing and bedding worn or used by the infested person in the 2-day period just before treatment is started.

Treat the infested person: Requires using an over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication. Follow these treatment steps:

1. Before applying treatment, remove all clothing from the waist up.
2. Apply lice medicine, also called pediculicide (peh-DICK-you-luh-side), according to label instructions. If your child has extra long hair (longer than shoulder length), you may need to use a second bottle. Pay special attention instructions on the bottle regarding how long the medication should be left on and whether rinsing the hair is recommended after treatment.

WARNING: Do not use a creme rinse or combination shampoo/conditioner before using lice medicine. Don't re-wash hair for 1-2 days after treatment.

3. Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
4. If a few live lice are still found 8-12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. Comb dead and remaining live lice out of the hair. The medicine may take longer to kill lice.
5. If, after 8-12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found and lice seem as active as before, the medicine may not be working. See your health care provider for a different medication; follow treatment directions.
6. Nit (head lice egg) combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft. Many flea combs made for cats and dogs are also effective.
7. After treatment, check hair and comb with a nit comb every 2-3 days to remove nits and lice. Continue to check for 2-3 weeks until you are sure all lice and nits are gone.
8. If using OTC pediculicides, retreat in 7-10 days. If using the prescription drug malathion, retreat in 7-10 days ONLY if crawling bugs are found.

Treat the household: Head lice do not survive long if they fall off a person and cannot feed. You don't need to spend a lot of time or money on house cleaning activities. Follow these steps to help avoid re-infestation by lice that have recently fallen off the hair or crawled onto clothing or furniture.

1. To kill lice and nits, machine wash all washable clothing and bed linens that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment. Use the hot water (130° F) cycle. Dry laundry using high heat for at least 20 minutes.
2. Dry clean clothing that is not washable, (coats, hats, scarves, etc.).

OR

Store all clothing, stuffed animals, comforters, etc., that cannot be washed or dry cleaned into a plastic bag; seal for 2 weeks.

3. Soak combs and brushes for 1 hour in rubbing alcohol, Lysol[®], or wash with soap and hot (130° F) water.
4. Vacuum the floor and furniture. The risk of getting re-infested from a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or sofa is very small. Don't spend a lot of time on this. Just vacuum the places where the infested person usually sits or lays. Do not use fumigant sprays; they can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Prevent Reinfestation: Lice are most commonly spread directly by head-to-head contact and much less frequently by lice that have crawled onto clothing or belongings. As a short-term measure to control a head lice outbreak in a community, school, or camp, you can teach children to avoid playtime and other activities that are likely to spread lice.

- Avoid head-to-head contact common during play at school and at home (sports activities, on a playground, slumber parties, at camp).
- Do not share clothing, such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, or hair ribbons.
- Do not share infested combs, brushes, or towels.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.

My child has head lice. I don't. Should I treat myself to prevent being infested?

No, although anyone living with an infested person can get head lice. Check household contacts for lice and nits every 2-3 days. Treat only if crawling lice or nits (eggs) within a 1/4 inch of the scalp are found.

I have heard that head lice medications don't work, or that head lice are resistant to medication. Is this true?

Like germs that are resistant to antibiotics, some lice also develop resistance to the medicine used to kill them. Resistance tends to be scattered. It may be present in one neighborhood, but not another. However, there are many reasons why medications may seem not to work.

- **Misdiagnosis of a head lice infestation.** A diagnosis can be made if a person has crawling bugs on the head or many lice eggs within 1/4 inch (about the width of your little finger) of the scalp. Nits found on the hair shaft further than 1/4 inch from the scalp have already hatched. Treatment is not recommended for people who only have nits further than 1/4 inch away from the scalp.
- **Not following treatment instructions fully.** Common problems include:
 1. making the hair too wet with water before applying a pediculicide -- this dilutes the pediculicide
 2. using a creme rinse or conditioner shampoo before applying a pediculicide -- this interferes with the medication
 3. failure to leave the pediculicide on long enough -- follow drug label instructions
 4. re-shampooing the hair again immediately after applying the pediculicide -- don't rewash hair for 1-2 days after treatment
 5. inadequate amount of medication -- extra long hair may require two bottles of pediculicide to fully wet the hair
 6. not combing. Using medication alone may not be enough to cure a head lice infestation. Combing the hair to remove lice and eggs has been shown to help.

- **Medication not working at all (resistance).** If head lice medication does not kill any crawling bugs within 24 hours, then resistance is likely. If the medication kills some of the bugs or the bugs are twitching 24 hours after treatment then resistance to medication is probably not occurring.
- **Medication kills crawling bugs, but is not able to penetrate the eggs.** It is very difficult for head lice medication to penetrate the nit shell. Medication may effectively kill crawling bugs, but may not treat the nits. This is why follow-up treatment is recommended.
- **New infection.** You can get infested more than once with head lice. Children often get re-infested from a playmate. If your child is infested, discuss it with parents of the children your child plays with. Treating all infested children at the same time will help prevent reinfestation.

Should my pets be treated for head lice?

No. Head lice do not live on pets.

My child is under 2 years old and has been diagnosed with head lice. Can I treat him or her with prescription or OTC drugs?

For children under 2 years old, remove crawling bugs and nits using a nit comb. If this does not work, ask your child's health care provider for treatment recommendations. The safety of head lice medications has not been tested in children 2 years of age and under.

What OTC medications are available to treat head lice?

Many head lice medications are available at your local drug store. Each OTC product contains one of the following active ingredients.

1. **Pyrethrins** (ple-WREATH-rins): often combined with piperonyl butoxide (ple-PER-a-nil beu-TOX-side);
Brand name products include A-200*, Pronto*, R&C*, Rid*, Triple X*.

Pyrethrins are natural extracts from the chrysanthemum flower. Though safe and effective, pyrethrins only kill crawling lice, not unhatched nits. A second treatment is recommended in 7-10 days to kill any newly hatched lice. Treatment failures are common.

2. **Permethrin** (per-meth-rin);
Brand name product: Nix*.

Permethrins are similar to natural pyrethrins. Permethrins are safe and effective and may continue to kill newly hatched lice for several days after treatment. A second treatment may be necessary in 7-10 days to kill any newly hatched lice that may have hatched after residual medication from the first treatment was no longer active. Treatment failures are common.

What are the prescription drugs used to treat head lice?

1. **Malathion** (Ovide*): When used as directed, malathion is effective in treating lice. Some medication remains on the hair and can kill newly hatched lice for seven days after treatment. Malathion is intended for use on people 6 years of age and older. Few side-effects have been reported. Malathion may sting if applied to open sores caused by scratching. The medication is flammable.
2. **Lindane** (Kwell*): When used as directed, the drug is probably safe. Overuse, misuse, or accidentally swallowing Lindane can be toxic to the brain and other parts of the nervous system. For those reasons Lindane is generally used only if

other medications have failed. Lindane should not be used if excessive scratching has caused open sores on the head. It should be used with caution in persons who weigh less than 110 pounds.

Which head lice medicine is best for me?

If you aren't sure, ask your pharmacist or health care provider. When using the medicine, less than 110 pounds.

Which head lice medicine is best for me?

If you aren't sure, ask your pharmacist or health care provider. When using the medicine, always follow the instructions provided.

When treating head lice

1. Do not use extra amounts of the lice medication unless instructed. These drugs are insecticides and can be dangerous when misused or overused.
2. Do not treat the infested person more than three times with the same medication if it does not seem to work. See your health care provider for alternative medication.
3. Do not mix head lice drugs.

Should household sprays be used to kill adult lice?

No. Spraying the house is NOT recommended. Fumigants and room sprays can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.

Should I have a pest control company spray my house?

No. Vacuuming floors and furniture is enough to treat the household.

**Use of trade names is for identification purposes only and does not imply endorsement by the Public Health Service or by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about the disease described above or think that you may have a parasitic infection, consult a health care provider.

Revised August 18, 2005



**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION
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If you have questions, contact your local health department or clinic

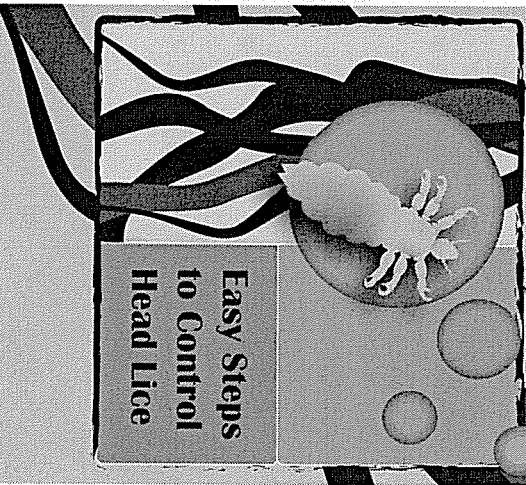


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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO HEAD LICE

Easy Steps to Control Head Lice



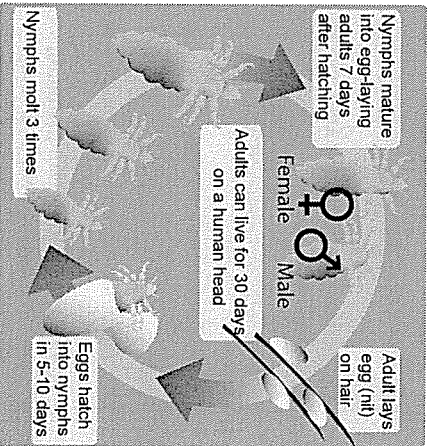
What are head lice?

Head lice are small insects that live in people's hair and feed on their blood. Lice glue their eggs, or "nits," to hair so that the nits do not get brushed off.

Head lice die quickly (within two days) without feeding so they cannot live very long away from your child's head.

Nits take six to nine days to hatch, and seven or more days for the lice to become egg-laying adults.

Development of Head Lice



How do people get head lice?

Children can give head lice to other children when they share combs, hats, clothing, barrettes, helmets, scarves, headphones, or other personal items. Head lice are a problem in homes, day care centers, elementary, and preschools. Children are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school.

How do I know if my child has lice?

If someone has head lice, their scalp will be very itchy. The only way to know if your child has lice is to look through their hair.

Don't confuse dirt or dandruff with nits. Nits stick on the hair.

How can I get rid of my child's lice?

Nit combing and removal

If your child has head lice, the best way to get rid of the lice is to comb their hair every day with a nit comb for two weeks.

Nit combs should be metal (not plastic) and have long teeth. Several brands of nit combs are available at your local pharmacy.

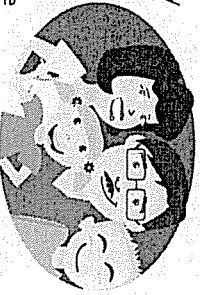
A good example is the LiceMeister®* metal comb that costs about \$10. Metal flea combs found at pet stores may be used as well.

The best way to remove nits is to part the hair into small sections. As each section is combed, fasten the hair to the scalp to keep track of what has been combed. It is easier to comb wet hair.



Any nits that cannot be combed out must be removed. You can do this by picking them out with fingernails or by cutting a single hair between the scalp and where nits are attached.

Check all family members' hair completely. Common places to find lice are close to the scalp, the neckline, and behind the ears.



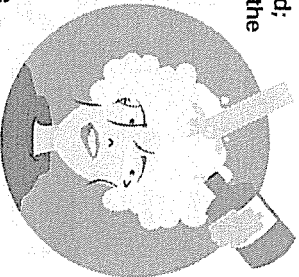
Treatments

Permethrin or pyrethrin products are the active ingredients in most over-the-counter head lice treatments. The best active ingredient is permethrin. Nix®* cream rinse is an over-the-counter treatment that uses permethrin.



VERY IMPORTANT TREATMENT INFORMATION:

- Follow the label directions carefully.
- Do not leave the product on for a longer time than recommended; it will not kill the lice faster.
- Treat only people who have head lice.



- Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or rinse between people.
- Even after treatment, you should remove nits daily with a metal nit or flea comb until all nits are completely removed.

- Wait at least seven to ten days before treating someone for a second time if they still have lice.



What if the treatment did not work?

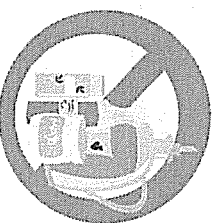
Here are a few reasons the treatment might not have worked:

- The directions on the treatment product were not followed closely enough.
- The nits were not completely removed.
- The child got head lice again from a brother, sister, or playmate.
- Lice may not die right away.
- The problem was not lice.
- If permethrin or pyrethrin products do not work when used properly, you should talk to your doctor about the prescription for Ovide®*.



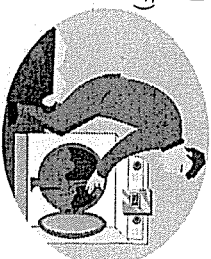
There is NO proof that the following products work:

- Vinegar
- Compounds that say they dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal."
- Mayonnaisse
- Olive oil
- Tea tree oil
- Lotions that "suffocate" lice

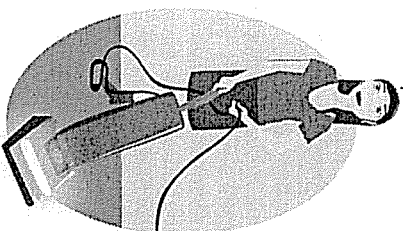


Here are a few other things you can do to get rid of the lice or nits in your home

- Wash clothing and bedding in hot water (130°F) then dry on a hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- Seal items in a plastic bag for two weeks to kill lice because they cannot get a blood meal.



- Boil combs, brushes, hair bands, and barrettes in water for five minutes, or soak them in rubbing alcohol or Lysol®* for one hour.
- Vacuum carpets and furniture.



* Use of this product name does not imply commercial endorsement by the California Department of Public Health.