

# PEDICULOSIS



Head lice infestations can occur whenever adults and children are in close personal contact. Parents should check their child for head lice regularly. If lice or eggs are found, refer to the information provided below. Head lice are very small (less than 1/8" long, about this size [---]), tan to brownish-colored insects that live on human heads and lay their eggs (nits) close to the scalp. The eggs are tiny (about the size of the eye of a small needle) and gray or white in color. Adult lice move quickly and do not like light.

## **Symptoms:**

If your child is experiencing itching of the head and neck, look for:

- Crawling lice in the hair
- Eggs (nits) glued to the hair, often found behind the ears and at the back of the neck
- Scratch marks on the head or back of the neck at the hairline

## Spread:

Lice **do not** jump or fly; they crawl and can fall off the head. Lice do not spread to or from pets. Lice are spread by close head-to-head contact during events such as sport activities, scouts, slumber parties, other play activities and by sharing personal items such as:

- Combs, brushes, barrettes
- Hats, scarves, sports head gear
- Jackets, blankets, sheets, pillowcases
- Stuffed animals

## Lice Life Cycle:

- Head lice only lay their eggs while on the head, and it takes 7-10 days for the eggs to hatch.
- Nits which are more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the scalp are dead or empty and will not hatch. Eggs will not hatch if they fall off the head.
- Head lice do not live longer than 48 hours off the head.
- Head Lice do not spread to or from pets.



## Contagious Period:

- A person with head lice is contagious until treated with a lice treatment product.
- Exclusion from Childcare and School until treatment has been completed.
- Children with head lice should not congregate with others until the first treatment is completed and no live lice are seen. Nits are NOT considered live lice.

DO NOT clean or wash hair immediately prior to applying any type of lice medication to the hair and scalp.

Hair should not be washed for 1-2 days after treatment.

- With certain products a second treatment is recommended 7 to 10 days later to kill any lice that may have hatched after the first treatment.
- It may take 24 hours for products to kill lice.
- Lice treatment products are not 100% effective in killing lice, especially nits.
- Removing the nits (nitpicking) is an **essential part** of the treatment for controlling the spread of head lice. The nits are glued onto the hair shaft as they are laid and require effort to remove.
- To remove the nits, use a metal nit comb, your fingernails to slide eggs off the hair shafts, or use scissors to cut the hair shafts that have nits glued to them.
- Continue checking the head and combing hair daily for four weeks. If all nits are not removed, some may hatch and the child will be infested again.

**Remember:** it takes at least four weeks to get rid of lice and nits.