

Dealing with Head Lice: A Practical Approach

The Nature of the Problem

Head lice transmission occurs when living lice, not nits, move from one person to another, usually as a result of direct contact between the two. Head lice may also be transmitted by the sharing of combs, hair brushes, head gear, and other clothing which has direct contact with the hair.

They are a nuisance and do not have any serious health consequences.

Control of Head Lice: Home

- The home is the primary point of control for head lice and children should be inspected weekly by their parents
- If one member in a household has lice than all members should be checked and all infested members should be treated

Treatment of Head Lice

- Primary treatment of head lice is accomplished by using a pediculocidal (louse killing) shampoo. You can either use prescription or over the counter shampoos, Rid, Nix, Pronto, Lice Ice, etc.
- Adequate treatment involves using a lice shampoo and then following the two week regimen below. It is important to remove all the nits from the hair. Parents are encouraged to do weekly hair inspections.

Two Week Regimen to Treat a Head Lice Infestation

Day 1: Apply pediculocidal shampoo followed by a thorough fine-tooth wet combing. This should kill most adults and nymphs and remove most viable nits.

Days 2 - 6: **Daily** apply ordinary shampoo followed by cream rinse and a thorough fine-tooth wet combing. This should remove additional adults, nymphs, and nits.

Day 7: Apply pediculocidal shampoo followed by a thorough fine-tooth wet combing. This should kill and remove most remaining adults, nymphs, and some nits.

Days 8-14: **Daily** apply ordinary shampoo followed by cream rinse and a thorough fine-tooth wet combing. This should remove residual adults and nymphs.

Conclusion

1. A head lice infestation is a mild health condition without serious health consequences for a child, and should not be considered as a major health threat to those infested or those potentially exposed.
2. Head lice cannot be completely eliminated from communities or schools. Neither the occurrence of a case nor an outbreak should be considered as evidence of a breakdown in hygienic practices on the part of individuals, families, or schools.
3. The most effective point of control of head lice is the household. Parents, not school employees, are best suited to screen their children for head lice and to properly treat and control lice within the household.

