

Advice for Stopping Head Lice (Pediculosis)



Awareness CLINICAL SERVICES AND PATIENT CARE PROGRAMS

LICE are small, wingless, gray-tan insects. Head lice only live on humans and anyone can get them, even with good health habits and hair washing. They crawl from one person to another, they cannot jump or fly.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

- Gray bugs in the hair
- Nits (white eggs) attached to hair follicles usually $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from the scalp.
- Itchy scalp
- Scalp rash sometimes

HOW LONG AFTER CONTACT CAN INFESTATION DEVELOP?

Eggs (nits) hatch in six to 10 days.

HOW IS IT SPREAD?

It is spread through close contact with infested individuals and sharing combs, brushes, hats and bedding.

WHEN IS THE CHILD MOST CONTAGIOUS?

The child is most contagious when there are live insects on the head.

WHEN CAN THE CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL?

The child may return to school after treatment, provided crawling lice are gone. Parents should be encouraged to remove nits, however nits alone should not be a reason for exclusion. Please read the product information carefully; some treatments may be inappropriate for infants. If the lice reoccur please call the doctor to avoid retreating too soon with some medications.

WHAT IS THE TREATMENT?

Check with the pharmacist for over-the-counter lice shampoo, follow the directions exactly. Additional steps may be advised by your child's school, your pharmacist, or your child's doctor's office for non-pesticide treatment. Nits should be combed out with a fine toothed comb. Children with head lice or nits should be watched closely for two weeks for new head lice. Close contacts need to be examined/treated for crawling lice. At home, wash bedding and clothes in hot water or dry-clean, or seal in a plastic bag for 10 days. Avoid sharing beds, combs and brushes. At school, avoid sharing headgear, hang coats separately, use individual pillow/sleep mats, and avoid a common storage container. Vacuum upholstery, rugs and cars. Dispose of vacuum bags immediately, wrap them in plastic bags, seal and throw away.

This general healthcare information should not be used as a substitute or in place of contacting your child's healthcare provider. If you need further assistance, call 404.250.kids to speak to a pediatric nurse. For more information check out our Web site at www.choa.org and click on "medical library," "for professionals" or "for parents."