

Head Lice/Pediculosis

Nits resemble small flakes of dandruff, but do not fall from the hair when brushed or blown with a dryer. They are actually glued to the hair and look like tiny beads (usually shiny and opalescent, but may vary from white to black in color). Generally they are first found in the hairline at the back of the neck and in the hair around the ears, but in advanced cases are seen throughout the hair.

Head-lice infestation is most frequent on children aged 3–10 and their families. Approximately 3% of school children in the United States contract head lice. Females are more frequently infested than males. Those of African descent rarely suffer infestation due to differences in hair texture. Head lice are spread through direct head-to-head contact with an infested person. From each egg or "nit" may hatch one nymph that will grow and develop to the adult louse.

Lice feed on blood once or more often each day by piercing the skin with their tiny needle-like mouthparts. While feeding they excrete saliva, which irritates the skin and causes itching.

Lice cannot burrow into the skin.

Diagnosis

The most common symptom of lice is pruritus (itching) on the head which normally intensifies 3 to 4 weeks after the initial infestation. The bite reaction is very mild and it can be rarely seen between the hairs.

Treatment

There is no product or method which assures 100% destruction of the eggs and hatched lice after a single treatment. However, there are a number of treatment modalities that can be employed with varying degrees of success. These methods include chemical treatments, natural products, combs, shaving, hot air, and silicone-based lotions.

Epidemiology

About 6-12 million people, mainly children, are treated annually for head lice in the United States alone. Normally head lice infest a new host only by close contact between individuals, making social contacts among children and parent child interactions the most common routes of infestation, also possible is through shared combs, brushes, towels, clothing, beds or closets, jackets, caps and scarves. Avoid trying on hats and/or wigs especially during the holiday season. Head-to-head contact is still by far the most common route of lice transmission.

Treat the House

Bed linens and clothing recently worn must be washed in hot water and soap using bleach or Lysol where possible, and dried under high heat setting. Any place the child's head has been, such as hats, hoods, scarves, jackets, sleeping bags, pillows, stuffed animals and beds, should be washed. Clothing that cannot be washed should be dried cleaned.

How to Prevent the Spread of Lice or Nits:

Frequently check your child's head; (daily, when lice have been reported).

Notify the school immediately if you find evidence of lice or nits. It is incumbent upon the parents to notify the school if a child has or had head lice recently, even if she/he has already been treated and cleared by a physician.

It is advised that girls keep their hair up in a ponytail and preferably braided.

Thank you for your cooperation