

## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- **Continue to watch your child for signs of lice for two weeks after the last live bug is found.** Parents often quit control measures too soon and start the infestation over again with surviving bugs.
- **Good communication is helpful for everyone!** Please share your experience and knowledge with your child's friends, school and day care. It is helpful for all exposed families to be working on the problem at the same time to limit re-exposure.
- Make watching for head lice a weekly part of hygiene care for your child.
- Just as with other bug bites, itching may linger after the bugs are gone.
- Teach your children prevention hints:
  - \* Limit head-to-head contact with other children in telling secrets and playful games.
  - \* Avoid sharing personal items such as combs, hats or hair ribbons from another child.
  - \* Place coats and belongings on racks and in lockers not in piles with others coats.
- Watch your child for signs of a secondary scalp infection from intense scratching.
- Do not treat members of the family who do not show signs of infestation. Be sure to check all family members every 2-3 days for signs of head lice.

### For More Information

Call your child's school nurse or County Public Health Agency.

### Online Resources

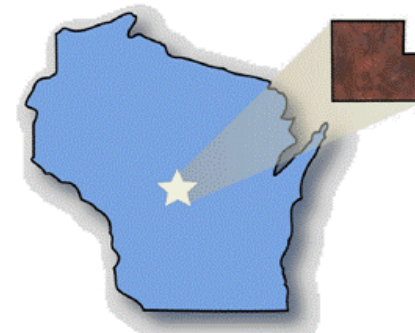
Center for Disease Control Web Site  
[www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/)

National Pediculosis Association Web Site  
[www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

02/2012

# HEAD LICE: A PARENT'S GUIDE

## Wood County Health Department



Riverview Clinic Building- 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
420 Dewey Street  
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495  
Phone: 715-421-8911  
Fax: 715-421-8962

City Hall Plaza  
630 South Central Avenue, Suite 303  
Marshfield, WI 54449  
Phone: 715-387-8646  
Fax: 715-389-1285

<http://www.co.wood.wi.us/health/>

## LIFECYCLE OF HEAD LICE

**RULE #1**  
CHECK THE ENTIRE FAMILY DAILY DURING AN INFESTATION. TREAT ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE EVIDENCE OF ACTIVE LICE.

The first life stage of head lice is the nit. This is the egg stage of lice development - the next generation of bugs! Nits are very small, oval-shaped and are normally laid on the hair close to the scalp, however they can be found further down on a hair shaft. They hatch in 7-10 days. Nits are stuck tight to the hair and can be confused with dandruff that is easily blown off the hair. There can be

alive and dead nits. Nits closest to the scalp are normally the alive nits, however, they can be found all along the hair shaft. Nits are translucent when newly laid and turn darker as they age.

The second life stage for head lice is the nymph. Nymphs hatch from the nit eggs, and look like an adult louse, but smaller. Nymphs mature into adults about 7 days after hatching.

The final life stage is the adult. The adult louse is tan to grayish-white in color and can live up to 30 days on a person's head. They do not normally survive more than 24-48 hours without a host.

Lice are spread through direct head-to-head contact with an infested person. Lice **do not jump or fly**, but crawl onto children during close contact, such as when telling secrets or during active play. Occasional infestations may be caused from sharing personal items such as hats, combs, and hair ribbons or from items such as pillows or headrests.

If you find your child has head lice, everyone that has had close physical contact with him or her should be notified, including your child's school. This helps put the classroom teacher on the alert for signs of lice in other children.

Lice are the size of a grain of pepper when newly hatched and grow to the size of a sesame seed. They shy from light and move quickly.

## CAUSES FOR TREATMENT FAILURES

**RULE #5**  
CHEMICAL SHAMPOOS ARE TOXIC PESTICIDES AND SHOULD NOT BE OVER USED. SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP FROM YOUR PHYSICIAN, PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OR SCHOOL NURSE IF THE SHAMPOOS ARE NOT WORKING FOR YOU.

Resistance to lice shampoos has become an increasing problem. If the bugs seem resistant to one shampoo brand, do not repeat use of that brand. Manual removal is the best option for resistant lice. Common problems leading to treatment failures include:

- Making hair too wet with water before applying the shampoo. This dilutes the chemical.
- Using a crème rinse or shampoo containing conditioner, which interferes with the medication.
- Failure to leave the shampoo on

long enough. Follow the package directions or your medical provider's advice carefully.

- Do not re-shampoo the hair for 24-48 hours after using lice shampoo.
- Using inadequate amounts of shampoo. Hair must be fully wet with shampoo to be effective. A bottle is a dose for one person; long hair may require two bottles.
- Inadequate nit picking. Shampoos are not enough to control an infestation.



## HOUSECLEANING ISSUES

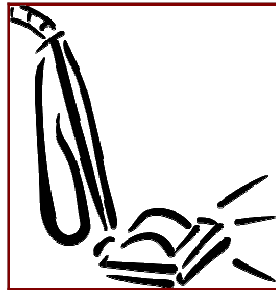
**RULE #4  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
LICE SPRAYS ARE  
NOT  
RECOMMENDED.  
VACUUM AREAS  
MOST USED BY THE  
PERSON.**

Try not to focus only on house cleaning activities because bugs do not survive more than 24-48 hours off of a host. The key is to try and find a balance between the nit-picking and the cleaning.

Vacuuming is an effective tool for furniture, mattresses, carpeting and car seats. Bug sprays are **not** recommended. Empty the dust bag

before cleaning to increase the suction of the vacuum.

- Vacuum items that cannot be washed or bag them for 2 weeks. Vacuuming toys that cannot be washed is as effective as bagging these items.
- Separate your child's available clothing to limit the washing you will need to do. Wash and wear the same outfits until you are done with the problem and leave the closet and drawers closed.
- Wash bedding, nightclothes, towels and clothing worn in the last two days in a HOT (130°) washer and dryer. Do not forget to wash the coats and hats. **The heat kills the bugs, not the soap.**
- Articles that cannot be washed may be dry cleaned or bagged for 14 days to kill the nits.
- Thoroughly clean brushes, hair accessories, and combs by soaking in alcohol or Lysol for 1 hour or soak in HOT water (not boiling) for 10 minutes.
- The bugs cling to fiber, not smooth surfaces. Spend your time cleaning fabric areas most used by the person such as bedding, clothing and their favorite chair.



## NIT-PICKING HINTS

**RULE #2  
MAKE WATCHING FOR  
LICE A PART OF THE  
ROUTINE WEEKLY CARES  
FOR YOUR CHILD!**

Make nit-picking easy on your child! Place the child in a comfortable position. Recognize their limits to sit still and allow for frequent breaks. You are pulling on their hair!

Nit-pick the younger child when they are asleep. Gentle picking of the hair

can be soothing to a sleepy child. Select nit-picking times when the older child is well rested and fed.

Entertain the child with books, singing or a movie.

Put emphasis on one section of hair at a time and **do that section well**, moving to a different section after the child has had a break. Cut out stubborn nits with a safety scissors.

**For head lice control, nit-picking is the best way to spend your time and energy!**

- Wet hair and a fresh haircut make nit combing easier.
- Mix a ½ vinegar (one cup water with one cup vinegar) solution. Saturate hair with this solution and dampen a towel with it. Use the towel like a turban to soak hair for about 1 hour prior to nit removal efforts. This solution helps loosen the bond the nit has with the hair shaft.
- Use a good nit comb shaped like a hair pick with a plastic handle and metal tines about 1 ½ inches long. Clean the nits out of the comb with an old toothbrush.
- Nit pick near a good light source. Concentrate, combing close to the scalp all the way down to the ends of the hair.
- Divide hair in sections and use a small 1/8-inch section of hair to run the comb through multiple times.

## SHAMPOOS

Lice treating shampoos are not designed to kill bugs immediately. Bug death may take 24-48 hours after treatment. The shampoos work differently; some work on dry hair and some on wet hair. The length of time the shampoo is on the hair is important. **Follow package directions or your medical provider's advice carefully.**

- Do not use a crème rinse or hair conditioner before the shampoo.
- Do not rewash the hair for 24-48 hours after the treatment. When using lice shampoos, avoid using a conditioner for 2-3 days after the shampoo to allow for the nit killing properties of the shampoo to work properly.
- Bottles of shampoo are designed for a single use. Hair must be wet with the shampoo. Long hair may require two bottles to thoroughly cover the hair.
- The over-the-counter lice shampoos may be repeated ONCE 7-10 days after the first shampooing. **Do not use these special shampoos more frequently.** Over-the-counter shampoos should not be used more than three times in your effort to control the lice. Prescription shampoos should not be repeated unless active lice are still present.
- Use shampoos over the sink, not the tub, to prevent entire body from exposure to the chemicals.
- Prevent shampoo exposure in the eyes.
- When rinsing the shampoo, use cool water to minimize absorption of the chemical by the skin.
- After the louse shampoo treatment, change into clean clothing. Do not use another regular household or louse shampoo for 24-48 hours after treatment. This can interfere with the insecticide properties of the louse shampoo.
- Prescription strength shampoos contain alcohol and may sting open sores caused from scratching.
- Some shampoos are highly flammable. Avoid smoking and open flames when using these products!

## SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS

### RULE #3 DON'T LOSE YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR!

Be aware of populations at risk to chemical exposures! Treatment can be harmful to **both** those applying the shampoo and those getting the shampoo.

- If you are pregnant or nursing, do not apply to children or use these products on yourself.
- Do not apply shampoos if you or the children have open sores on hands, neck or scalp.
- **Consult a doctor** before applying shampoos to children with medical conditions such as:
  - \* Children with a history of asthma.
  - \* Children currently undergoing or with a history of chemotherapy treatment.
  - \* Children with a history of allergies.
  - \* Children with a history of epilepsy.

**Children under 2 years of age and at-risk children (listed above) should have the bugs and nits manually removed.**

### OLIVE OIL

Olive oil may be used as a tool to control lice between shampoo treatments. Olive oil is a cheap, heavy and non-toxic oil that can be used to smother the bugs.

- Children's hair can be oiled on different days to help with time constraints on morning routines.
- Use enough oil to thoroughly saturate hair and scalp.
- For young children, leave the oil on 8-10 hours during the day covering with a washable stocking cap. Older children and adults can use the oil overnight and cover with a shower cap.
- Shampoo oil out with normal warmed shampoo or dish washing liquid.
- Be cautious to avoid slips and falls with the use of oils.