

MANAGEMENT OF HEADLICE: Information For Parents

No health issue in the school age child is associated with as much panic and misconception as head lice. Just the mention of these two words makes all of us begin to feel our heads itch. Actually, head lice are common among children ages 3-12. They are not responsible for the spread of any disease, but they definitely are a nuisance. Transmitted through head to head contact, they are equal opportunity pests, affecting all socioeconomic and ethnic groups. They have nothing to do with cleanliness. Please remind your child not to share brushes, combs, hair accessories, hats, hoodies, hats, pillows or sleeping bags with their peers throughout the school year, vacations, and summer season.

Children who have head lice scratch their head frequently or complain of itchiness, particularly on the crown, nape of the neck or behind their ears. It is important that you periodically check these areas for the presence of lice or their eggs (nits). Adult lice are about the size of a sesame seed and are often missed when heads are checked because they crawl very quickly. They do not fly or jump. Nits are cream colored and about the size of a knot in a thread. They are “glued” to the side of the hair shaft, and unlike dandruff or hair product, are impossible to flick off.

No child with live head lice is allowed to be in school. Families of classmates are notified by the nurse if “a case of head lice” has been detected, and parents of children with lice are referred to their health care provider or pharmacist for treatment options. Should a child have lice, friends and family members also need to be alerted and vacuuming and cleaning as outlined below is a must. Once the treatment has been administered and the nits are removed, the child is allowed to return to school. Upon return, the child must bring the outer packaging of the product used and be checked by the school nurse. Even after initial treatment, meticulous daily removal of nits for three weeks at home and repeat treatment as specified in product instructions is essential to prevent recurrence. It is a common misconception that a shampoo solves the problem, but unfortunately it is not that easy.

The following links should be helpful in more specific head lice management.

Thank you,

Mrs. S.

My Child Has Head Lice- Step By Step Home Instructions
www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/parents.html
www.headlice.org

