

# HEAD LICE

## Fact Sheet

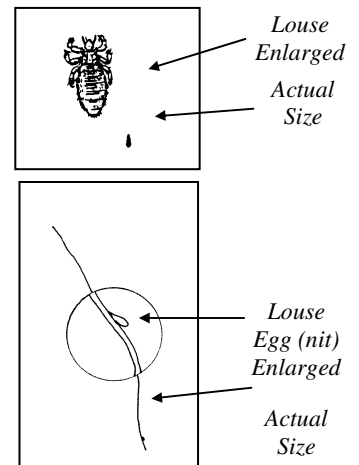
Head lice are spread by direct head-to-head contact. To get rid of head lice, two treatments, one week apart and the removal of nits daily is needed. Follow-up of all close contacts is very important to help limit the spread of head lice to others.

### How did my child get head lice?

- Head lice are a nuisance but not a health hazard. They don't result from a lack of cleanliness.
- Head lice spread primarily through head-to-head contact when children's heads touch in day-to-day activities.
- Lice cannot jump or fly, but do crawl quickly from one person's head to another.

### What do I look for?

- Itching and scratching are common signs of head lice. Sometimes there are no symptoms at all. Head lice move quickly and may blend with the colour of the hair, therefore, you may never see one. If you do, it will be about the size of a sesame seed.
- Look for the nits (very tiny eggs), that may look like dandruff but are firmly glued to the hair near the scalp and can't be flicked off.
- They are often found around the nape of the neck and ears, but can be anywhere on the head. They are half the size of a pinhead, greyish-white and egg-shaped.



### What should I do to get rid of head lice?

- Stay calm.** You can get rid of head lice, but it takes time.
- Check all family members. Treat only those who have nits or lice.
- Obtain a head lice treatment product from your drug store. Some products are not safe for children under 2, pregnant and breastfeeding women or people with allergies. Call your doctor if you're concerned about safety.
- Follow the product directions carefully. Two treatments, 1 week apart, are recommended.
- Wear rubber or plastic gloves to avoid unnecessary exposure to the chemicals, or wash your hands thoroughly immediately after using the product.
- Remove all nits, as some may survive treatment. Use a nit comb or your fingers, and remember "nit picking" takes time!

### Is there more?

- Check heads daily for nits and remove them for 2 weeks after treatment and then weekly throughout the year.
- Inform your child's school, daycare, baby-sitter, parents of playmates and other close contacts so that other families can take action, if required. It will give them the opportunity to deal with a potential problem early and increase the chance that your child is returning to a head lice free environment.
- Extra house cleaning and use of insecticide sprays are not needed.
- You may want to wash combs and brushes, clothing, pillowcases and towels, in hot water or dry in a hot dryer to kill any live lice.

For more information, call:

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