

# HEALTHINFO



SCHOOL HEALTH TEAM

## Advice on Head Lice for Parents

### Parent Checklist

#### Treating family members:

- 1  Check all family members often (weekly) to identify signs of head lice as early as possible. Look for adult head lice, and nits (eggs) attached close to the scalp.
- 2  Treat everyone in the family who has head lice and nits. Treatment is available from a pharmacy, talk to a pharmacist before purchasing.
- 3  Remove head lice and nits from hair using your finger tips or head lice comb every day until there are no more nits present (natural light works best).
  - a. Separate hair into sections
  - b. Check each section of the head closely before moving on (remember to pay attention to the ears, forehead, and base of neck)
  - c. Dispose of head lice/nits carefully (eg. paper/ plastic bag)

**Tip:** To make nit removal easier, try sitting your child in front of a TV program or movie.



#### Treating the home:

- 4  Wash all used clothes and bedding in hot water, or dry in a hot dryer.
- 5  Put items that cannot be washed in hot water in a plastic sealed bag for 2 weeks (eg. stuffed animals, pillows, backpacks, comforters, hats, etc.).
- 6  Put all combs, brushes and hair accessories in hot, soapy water (Tip: try filling a bathtub or sink with hot soapy water).
- 7  Vacuum chairs, couches and carpets that have been used within the last few days.
- 8  Vacuum all cloth surfaces and carpets in vehicles used within the last few days (including car seats or booster seats).
- 9  Report any new cases of head lice to your school, day care centres, or any after-school activities to avoid spreading it to your family and community.
- 10  Repeat treatment and checklist in 7-10 days. Any nits that were missed would have hatched, therefore, a second treatment is necessary.

→ See flip side for frequently asked questions

# Frequently Asked Questions by Parents

## How do I know my child may have head lice?

Common signs of head lice are:

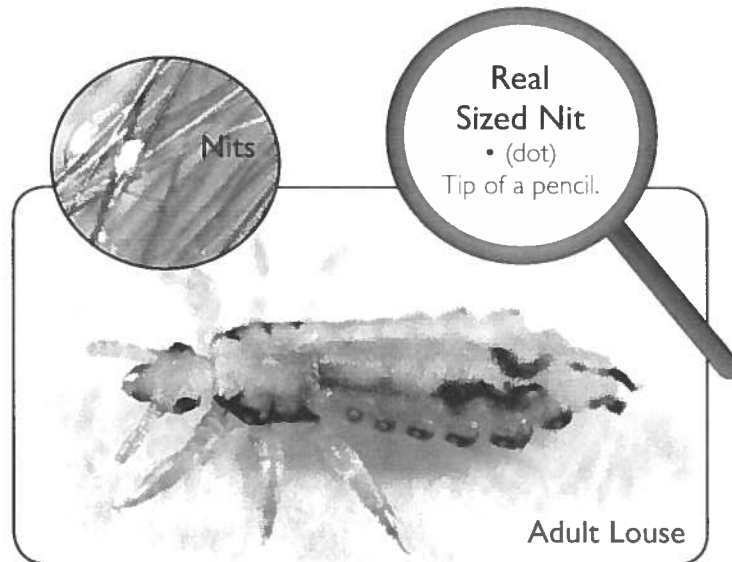
- Ticking feeling in the hair
- Frequent itching
- Sores on the scalp from scratching

## What do head lice and nits look like?

- When looking for head lice, you might see an adult louse but it is more common to see nits (eggs)
- Adult louse: tiny insect the size of a sesame seed that has six legs
- Nit: a cream coloured egg the size of a tip of a pencil that is usually oval and smooth; often confused with dandruff

## What's the difference between dandruff and a nit?

- Dandruff is easy to remove when touched
- Nits have to be pulled off with your fingernails



## Where on the head are lice and nits commonly found?

- Around the ears, forehead, and at the base of the neck

## What happens if my child has head lice?

- If your child is at school, the school will notify you and ask you to pick up your child
- You will have to treat your child before they can go back to school

## Do any household pets need to be treated?

- The only way you can get head lice is from another person
- Head lice/nits do not live on animals

### References:

Treating Head Lice Infestation. Centers for Disease Control, 2010. [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpdx/parasites/lice/factsht\\_head\\_lice\\_treating.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpdx/parasites/lice/factsht_head_lice_treating.htm)

Canadian Paediatric Society (2008). [http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head\\_lice](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice)

## What are head lice and nits?

- Tiny insects the size of a sesame seed that live on the heads of humans and feed on their blood
- They cannot fly or jump, but they crawl very fast
- The adults lay eggs, which are called nits
- The nits are glued on the hair close to the scalp, and take about a week to hatch
- The only way you can get head lice is from another person

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For more information, call the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit and speak to a Public Health Nurse.



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## Head Lice

### What is it?

- Head lice are insects found on the heads of people
- Having head lice is very common

### Signs & Symptoms

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair
- Itching, caused by the allergic reaction to the bites
- Irritability
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected.

### How do you get it?

- By direct contact with someone who has lice
- Contact is common during play at school and home (slumber parties, sports activities, at camp, on a playground).
- By wearing infested clothing, such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, or hair ribbons.
- By using infested combs, brushes, or towels.
- By lying on a bed, couch, pillow, carpet, or stuffed animal recently in contact with a person who has lice

### Where are head lice most commonly found?

- On the scalp behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck.
- Head lice are rarely found on the body, eyelashes, or eyebrows.

### Is there a product I can use to prevent getting head lice?

- No
- Discourage children from sharing hats, scarves, combs, and helmets

# Head Lice Treatment

**Step 1:** Treat the infested person/any infested family members:

- Get a head lice shampoo, cream rinse or both from a pharmacy.

**Step 2:** Remove the nits:

- Head lice shampoos and cream rinses will kill most of the nits (eggs), but one treatment usually does not kill them all.
- Bright, natural light helps you to see the nits better.
- Comb the hair, and then take a hold of a group of hair. Use your thumbnail against your finger to strip the nits from the hair, starting from the roots right down to the tips.
- Place the nits in a bag and throw it away when you are done. Pin back that grouping of hair and keep going until all nits are removed.
- Try to remove the very tiny eggs laid right next to the scalp. You may also comb out the nits by holding a fine-toothed comb at a downward angle.
- This is easier if you use conditioner after treatment. (Do not use conditioner after using NIX).
- Some plastic or metal fine-toothed combs work better than others.

**Step 3:** Treat the household:

- To kill lice and nits, machine-wash all washable clothing and bed linens that the infested person touched during the 2 days before treatment.
- Use the hot water cycle (130o F) to wash clothes. Dry laundry using the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean clothing that is not washable, (coats, hats, scarves, etc.).
- Store all clothing, stuffed animals, comforters, etc., that cannot be washed or dry cleaned in a plastic bag and seal it for 2 weeks.
- Soak combs and brushes for 1 hour in rubbing alcohol, Lysol, or wash with soap and hot (130 F) water.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture.
- It is not necessary to fumigate your house.

**For children under 2, you must pick out the nits by hand, DO NOT USE over the counter products**