

## Head Lice Information

### What are Head Lice?



Head lice are tiny parasitic insects that live on the human head. They do not live on animals. Adult lice are no bigger than a sesame seed, crawl quickly through the hair and do not like light. Nymphs (newly hatched lice) are even smaller depending on which stage they are in. They look like a black to brownish dot that moves. Nits (eggs) are tiny brownish tear drop shaped usually  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from scalp. They almost glisten in the light. Whitish to clear tear drop shaped nits farther away from the scalp have already hatched. Please do

not confuse with dandruff as nits cannot be flicked away, nits are glued to the hair and must be manually pulled off using a special comb.

### Life Cycle of Head Lice

As you can see from the chart, Female lice can attach 4-8 nits (eggs) to the hair every day. From there, it takes 7-10 days for the nits to hatch and then another 7-10 days for newly hatched lice to be able to start the process all over again. If you find lots of live lice with new and old nits glued to the hair, then lice have been on the head for at least a month and this is known as an infestation.

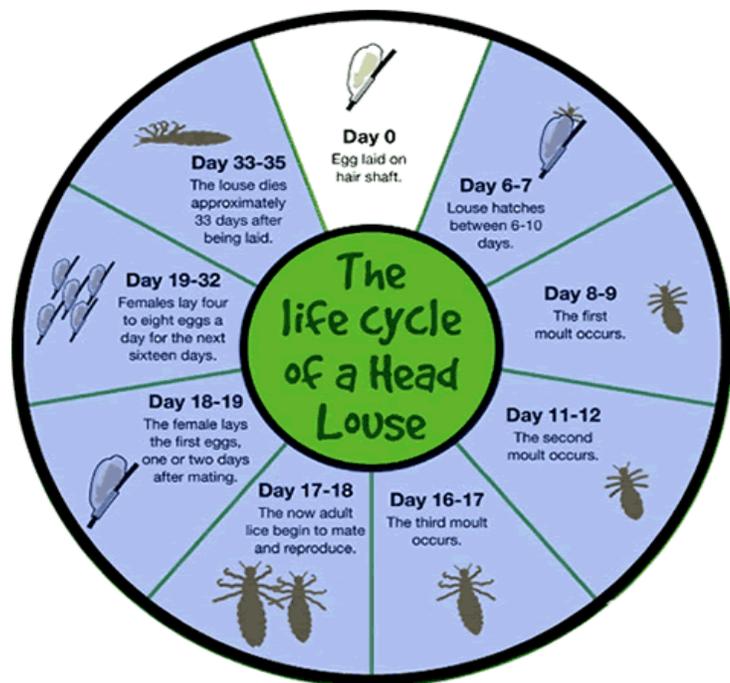
### How Do I Get Lice?

Anyone can get head lice and it is not a sign of being dirty or having un-kept hair, clothes, or house. Actually, they prefer clean hair, but if they are looking for a new home they will move to any head. Lice **DO**

**NOT** fly or jump. They have 6 legs at the front of their body which are perfect to hold onto hair. If placed on a hard surface they really cannot move from one place to another. Lice transfer when people have close head-to-head contact, but may also transfer by sharing hats, combs, jackets, and playing with each other's hair.

### What if my child gets head lice?

- Let the school nurse know. It's really important for the nurse to know as we follow a policy of when to check other children. Plus, we can help you with information regarding head lice.
- Check all members of the house and only treat the ones who have lice. Overtreatment and not following treatment is what has led to "super lice".
- If your child has been in close contact with family members or other children outside of school it's important that you let them know as this can cut down on continued transfer of head lice. School nurses cannot let specific people know because of the privacy act called HIPPA.



- Follow through with treatment; which includes daily combing with a special lice comb for 2 weeks and following the instructions on the product you decided to use. Lots of products on the market recommend retreating in 7 to 10 days.
- Keep your child at home until there are no more live lice. Nits are ok to still have and will be removed with daily combing.

#### **What does the school do regarding head lice?**

- Send children home if they are found with live lice at school.
- Help parents with information regarding head lice.
- Recheck children that have head lice when they return to school and for a period of time thereafter.
- Do classroom checks if multiple children have been found to have head lice.
- Do random head checks.

#### **How do I prevent re-infestation of head lice?**

- Treat hair with a lice product either from doctor or store. These products can kill the head lice and loosen the nits from the hair shaft. Also, natural ways can be found on internet, which have been shown to be effective.
- Comb hair with lice comb to remove lice and nits. This will need to be done on a daily basis for 2 weeks as nits can take up to 10 days to hatch. Combing will pull out as many nits as possible plus newly hatched lice before they can grow up and reproduce. **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP.**
- Wash, dry for at least 20 min., freeze and vacuum items that your child or anyone that has head lice has come into contact with within the last 48 hours. Lice that have fallen off the head can only survive for up to 48 hours without a blood meal and nits can only hatch if they have the perfect temperature. For Example:
  - Wash and dry bedding, clothes, jackets/coats, covers.
  - Dry pillows, back pack, stuff animals.
  - Freeze hair brushes, stuff animals, etc. that cannot go in dryer.
  - Soak brushes and combs in alcohol solution or very hot water.
  - Vacuum sofa, car, stuffed animals, etc.
- Continue to check family members as 1 louse can be hard to find and treat only when lice are found. The best way to check is by running a lice comb through family member's hair.

#### **What can I do to prevent my child from getting head lice?**

Talk with your child about not having close head-to-head contact when at school or at an after school activity. Looking at and taking pictures with electronic devices and phones have increased the transfer of lice. Plus, reinforce not sharing coats, hats, combs, etc. With this being said, lice have been around for thousands of years and they are probably not going anywhere anytime soon. So, the best thing to do is to check regularly by starting a routine at home once a week even when your child is not at school. It is better to catch it early than a month later and have to deal with an infestation.

**As always, the school nurses are here to help with information and get this taken care of. Please call us.**