

Head lice are small beige/brownish insects no larger than the size of sesame seeds that live and feed on the human scalp. The female head louse lays eggs, called nits, on the hair close to the scalp. The nits, which are tiny, whitish ovals firmly glued to the hair shafts, usually hatch within two weeks. Head lice may be hard to locate because they move to avoid light. Nits may be easier to find.

Make sure to treat head lice as soon as it is detected because head lice reproduce rapidly if untreated. There are both over the counter and prescription products available to treat head lice. It is very important that you carefully read and follow all of the directions of the product you select, as head lice treatments are only effective if you follow the required steps. It is also critical to remove **all** the nits from your child's hair. Use of a bright light will be helpful in identifying nits. Most lice shampoos come with a nit comb to help with nit removal, however, not all nits will be able to be removed in this manner. Some nits will need to be removed manually. Removal of all nits is the only way to prevent reinfestation. Additional measures that should be taken include:

- Check every member of your household for lice and nits and be alert for intense head scratching. Treat all household members who are infested.
- Continue to check for nits daily for the next 2-3 weeks. Remove all visible nits by using a nit comb or removing manually.
- Repeat lice treatment as recommended on the product information.
- Wash all unwashed clothing, bedding, towels in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 10 minutes.
- Place all items that cannot be washed such as pillows or stuffed animals in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum all furniture and carpeting.
- Wash combs and brushes in very hot water (130°F). Allow to soak for 10 minutes.
- Long hair should be confined as closely to the head as possible with a ponytail, braids, or a bun.
- If your doctor prescribed a product that kills nits (ovicidal), please bring the empty packaging with you when you bring your child in to be checked by the nurse.

The following measure can help prevent a recurrence of head lice:

- Discourage sharing of personal care items such as combs, brushes, barrettes, helmet, hair ties, hats, etc.
- If your child attends a sleepover, send his/her own bedding, pillow, blankets, sheets, sleeping bag, etc. Wash these items as soon as your child returns home.

Remember that your child must be checked by the school nurse and nit free before they can ride the bus and return to school.

Please be assured that head lice can be a common occurrence among school-age children. Lice do not discriminate. Anyone can get head lice from direct contact or by sharing personal items.