Head Lice

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp, where they lay eggs. They do not jump, fly, swim, or live on cats or dogs but can crawl very quickly.

Head lice are common in school aged children. They are not a health concern or a communicable disease. They are also not associated with illness or poor hygiene.

Symptoms

- tickling or itchy feeling on the head.
- feeling something moving in the hair.
- frequent scratching the head.

How do I know if my child has lice?

In very bright light look behind ears, near the neck and close to the scalp for small insects moving in hair (lice), and small eggs (called nits) that are attached to the hair near the scalp.

How to prevent lice

Lice spread from one person to another when there is close head-to-head contact or when items that have touched the hair of someone who has lice are shared.

Do not share personal items such as:

- brushes and combs
- hair bands, ties, and elastics
- head phones
- hats or helmets
- scarves or towels

Treatment of Head Lice

Lice shampoo products have been shown to be the most effective method for getting rid of head lice.

Do not treat anyone with a head lice product unless you find live lice in their hair.

Before using any head lice shampoo product, read the product inserts and carefully follow the instructions on the package.

For non-chemical treatment options, speak to your doctor, pharmacist or health care provider. Also, speak to your health care provider if your child has head lice and:

- is under 2 years old
- has a seizure disorder
- has lice or nits on their eyebrows and eyelashes
- has open sores or wounds on the scalp
- has allergies

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, call Motherisk at 1-877-439-2744 for more information.

Cleaning Your Home

Head lice can live up to 24 hours off the head. Pay special attention to items that directly touch the head such as hats, pillowcases, car seat covers, combs and brushes.

Wash these items in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer for at least 15 minutes or store the items in an airtight plastic bag for two weeks.

Reference: www.caringforkids.cps.ca
Head lice infestations: A clinical update, Canadian Pediatric Society, September, 2016

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