

Head Lice

Symptoms of Head Lice include:

- Lice or nits in hair
- Itchy scalp
- Itchy rash on neck
- Friends or classmates have lice

If you suspect your child may have Head Lice, you should inspect the scalp, looking for nits and lice. Lice are sesame seed sized, usually gray/brown and may move quickly. Nits are tiny, pearly, oval eggs, attached firmly to the hair shaft. Both can be found anywhere on the scalp, but usually prefer the nape of the neck, behind the ears and the crown. Do not treat unless you see signs of Head Lice – there is no need to treat if your child has been exposed but does not have any nits or lice.

Do not treat with Nix, and call us if:

- Your child is under two years old
- Your child has open sores on their scalp
- Mom or a household contact is pregnant or nursing

Check all family members and treat any infected members of the household the same way.

Treatment

- 1) **Vinegar Rinse:** If desired, the hair can be rinsed before shampooing with a solution of 1 part vinegar and 1 part water. This may help soften the nit capsule and make them easier to remove.
- 2) **Shampoo:** Wash hair with shampoo that does not contain a conditioner or cream rinse
- 3) **Towel Dry Hair:** To remove all liquid, and to prevent diluting medication
- 4) **Apply Nix** (available without prescription at pharmacies)
Apply the product to the hair with head over the sink, not while bathing or showering.
 - Always keep the eyes closed and covered.
 - Shake the bottle of Nix well, apply enough to soak the hair completely and cover the scalp.
 - Be sure to apply Nix behind the ears and at the base of the neck.
 - For a child with thick or long hair, 2 bottles may be necessary.
 - Allow Nix to remain on for 4 hours. This increased time is recommended due to failure of treatment with less time. Check scalp periodically for signs of irritation.
 - Nix may also be applied overnight. Place towel on the pillow or cover head with a bandana or shower cap.
- 5) **Rinse Hair** after treatment with warm water until water runs off clear.
 - Do not reshampoo hair for 5 days

Nit Picking

- 1) **Remove Nits** Removal of nits is essential to prevent reinfestation. No product kills all the eggs and up to 32% of nits hatch following treatment with medications like Nix.

- Part the hair into sections. Start at the top section and work with one inch portion of hair at a time, removing nits as you find them.
- Get the teeth of metal lice comb as close to the scalp as possible, cleaning the comb at regular intervals. After the whole head has been combed, recheck the entire head for nits and repeat if necessary.
- You may see live lice in the hair after treatment. These must be removed from the hair with the metal comb and by picking them out with your fingernails.
- The only way to ensure a person is lice free is through mechanical removal of nits. The most important nits to remove are the ones closest to the scalp. Nits that are more than 1 to 2 inches away from the scalp are empty and do not contain lice.
- Check the head daily for new nits or lice everyday for the next 2 weeks.
- Re-treat with Nix and repeat all steps if live lice seen after 7 days.
- Itching may persist for 2- 3 days after treatment.

Housekeeping

1) Clean and disinfect all personal items.

- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (above 130 degrees F) for 5 – 10 minutes.
- Machine wash or clean all personal items, hats, helmets, scarves, coats, towels, bed linen and clothing. Then dry using hot cycle of dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Place bedspreads, blankets, stuffed animals, helmets, headgear and items that can not be washed or dry cleaned in a sealed plastic bag for 10 days.
- Thoroughly vacuum all rooms and furniture used by household members who had lice.
- Vacuum car upholstery, including car seats.
- Lice sprays are not recommended for use in the home they are ineffective and expensive.

Olive Oil

Some research has shown that olive oil may be used to make nit removal easier and help to smother and kill lice.

1) Instructions for Use of Olive Oil:

- Saturate hair and leave on up to 4 hours or over night.
- It is recommended to apply olive oil every week for three weeks.

When to Call Us

- 1) If repeated infestation occurs despite treatment as instructed here.
- 2) If rash develops after treatment.

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 Adapted from Renee Howard, MD