

LESSONS IN LICE

It is important to remember that lice are nuisances, but they are not a threat to our health. They just make our kids miserable due to all the itching and scratching plus the interruptions of classroom time for head checks.

TRANSMISSION: Head lice can only move by crawling. They do not hop, skip, or fly. However, they do crawl at Olympic speeds. Remind your children not to share combs, brushes, coats, or clothes. Also, tell your children not to brush each other's hair as this can transmit the lice to your child's hands.

RECOGNIZING LICE: Generally, people with head lice scratch their scalp a lot. Look for signs of skin irritation from scratching. Lice are tiny brown insects that live on the human scalp. They are very light sensitive so they move quickly to stay out of sight. You can find the evidence of lice presence by identifying the nits, eggs. Nits are grayish white to yellow and shaped somewhat like a teardrop, but are the size of a sesame seed, if not smaller. They cling tightly to the hair shaft near but not on the scalp.

Dandruff and scalp debris is moved easily from the hair, but the nits hang on tightly.

LIFE SPAN: Once the adult human lice lay the nits it takes about one week for the eggs to hatch. It only takes the lice 7-10 days to mature into adulthood and each louse may lay 150 nits during its life span of one month. The adult louse needs a human host to survive and will die in 2 days without their host. It is possible for the nit to hatch even if it is not on a human, but it must find a host ASAP.

HEAD CHECKS: It is easiest to identify the nits in natural sunlight or another good light source. Take any hair ornaments out of the hair and brush thoroughly. Then section off the hair and check each section ½ inch by ½ inch and take your time. If you see a possible nit try to remove it, and if it clings firmly to the hair shaft then it is a nit.

TREATMENT FOR HEAD LICE: There are several products sold over the counter that are good but they are not 100 percent effective. "RID" is a shampoo and "NIX" is a cream rinse. The product is only part of the treatment. Do not use them on your child unless he/she has lice and/or nits in their hair. The products are not designed to prevent lice. Only use them as directed on the package and never use them on eyelashes. Also, consult a physician if the lice infested person has allergies, asthma, epilepsy or other preexisting condition.

