

# Pediculosis

(Head Lice)

## What are head lice?

- It is commonly found in most schools and daycare centers, especially after summer vacation
- It does NOT always cause itching
- It is found in all social classes – rich and poor
- It is found as much in clean hair as it is in dirty hair
- It is resistant to regular shampooing
- It is caused by an unpleasant parasite that does not transmit disease

## How are they transmitted?

- Lice are transmitted from one person to another by direct head to head contact, like a hug for example
- Lice are NOT easily spread through contact with personal belongings such as hats, combs, hairbrushes or pillowcases, or through contact with the back of sofas, or with sheets, carpets, eyeglasses, etc.

## What are lice?

They are insects as big as the head of a needle, grey in colour, with no wings:

- They live near the hair root and can sometimes be found on eyebrows or beards
- They feed on human blood
- They do not live on pets
- They do not jump or fly
- The female can lay an average of 5 (nits) per day
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## What are nits?

- Nits cling to the hair shaft and are difficult to remove
- Live nits are grayish-white eggs that look like puffy, shiny and translucent dandruff flakes. They are usually found within 6 mm of the scalp
- Dead nits are whiter and dried out. They are mainly found more than 6 mm away from the scalp

## How can head lice be prevented?

1. Check the child's head regularly, as well as the heads of other family members. Good lighting, a nit comb and a magnifying glass can help.
2. Remind children to avoid head-to-head contact, keep hats, caps, and scarves in their coat sleeves, not to share personal items, such as combs, hairbrushes, barrettes and hats, and to keep long hair tied back.

# What is the treatment?

## **1. Who should be treated?**

All household members should be examined (sisters, brothers, parents). Treat only those who have lice or live nits. The treatment is more effective when all family members who are infested are treated at the same time (on the same day). Inform anyone who may have come into contact with your child (school, daycare, extracurricular activities, neighbourhood friends, ect) so they also may be checked for lice.

## **2. What type of product can be used?**

The Ministère de la Santé et de Services sociaux recommends the following two types of products :

### Treatment in 2 applications (kill lice and nits):

- Kwellada- P™ 1%, Nix ® 1%, or Nyda™. These products are recommended for children 2 years and over.
- Pronto™ or R & C™. These products may be used for children age 2 and under.

These treatments in 2 applications need to be repeated 9 days after the first application.

OR

### Treatments in 3 Applications (kill lice but have little effect on nits):

- Zap™ or Resultz™. These products are recommended for children 2 and over.

These treatments in 3 applications need to be applied again after 7 days, and then again 7 days after that.

All of these products are available over-the-counter in drugstores. While there are other head lice products available on the market, their effectiveness has not been demonstrated in published studies.

## **3. How to apply the product**

Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the product selected. For the best chance of success, use a nit comb to remove lice and nits during treatment. When you are finished the treatment according to the manufacturer's instructions, you can dry the hair with a fresh towel or a hair dryer. Put used towels in with the dirty laundry. Administer the recommended number of applications, even if you find no lice or viable nits in the hair.

## **4. Removing Nits**

Apply a damp towel to the scalp for at least 30 minutes to help dislodge the nits. Place the head under a good light; a magnifying glass can help. Get a nit comb and work near a source of hot water. Untangle the hair with an ordinary comb. Separate the hair into tufts the width of the comb. Comb through each tuft of hair with a nit comb. Examine the hair section by section. Pay particular attention to behind the ears and the nape of the neck. Soak the nit comb in hot water after running it through each tuft of hair.

Use a nit comb to remove lice and nits 2, 11, and 17 days after the first application of either product. Using a nit comb increases your chances of successful treatment.

If you find live lice 17 days after the first application of the product, it is recommended that you repeat the treatment, choosing a different category of treatment than what you used the first time. If you have any doubts about the effectiveness of a treatment, consult a healthcare professional (pharmacist, nurse, or doctor).

## **5. Advising the school**

It is very important to treat your child as soon as possible. Remember to inform the school if the lice infestation persists or returns among your family members in order to prevent the spread of lice to other children.

## **6. Washing personal belongings**

The risk of infestation through contact with personal belongings is minimal; however personal belongings can be treated by any of these methods:

- Soaking them in head-lice medication for 5-10 minutes
- Soaking them in hot water (65°C or 150°F) for 5- 10 minutes
- Putting clothes in the dryer for 20 minutes set at the warmest setting
- Dry cleaning clothing
- Storing belongings in a sealed plastic bag for 10 days

Carpets and sofas can also be vacuumed. The use of vaporized insecticides in the environment is NOT recommended. Not only is this ineffective in controlling head lice, but it can also pose a serious health risk to people or animals exposed to a potentially toxic product.

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