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**Lice!**

**(And how to avoid a meltdown at home)**

Although contracting lice is extremely frustrating, it is not medically harmful and a common occurrence in school-aged children. Lice do not spread disease. Hopefully the following information can help you effectively treat your child if they do become infected, and help you prevent it from spreading!

We know, you’re already scratching your head just reading about it!

What are head lice?

* Tiny, pale, gray insects
* Lice lay and attach their eggs (nits) to the hair shaft (close to the scalp)
* The nits are white and more visible than the actual lice
* Their lifecycle repeats itself every 3 weeks if left untreated
* Lice do not jump, hop or fly
* Not a sign of poor hygiene
* Spread through prolonged head-to-head contact – sharing hats, pillows, brushes, etc.

Symptoms:

* White nits attached to hair shaft
* Itchy scalp
* Rash around the hairline, particularly the back of the neck

How to check your child for head lice:

1. Seat your child in a brightly lit room
2. Part the hair and look at the scalp
3. Look for crawling lice or nits
4. Nits are easier to see – small, white specks attached to the hair near the scalp
   1. Nits are attached – while dandruff, dirt or other particles are not!
5. Wet the hair and comb through small sections at a time
   1. After each comb-through, wipe the comb on a paper towel
   2. Inspect the scalp, the comb and the paper towel carefully

Treatment:

* Over-the-counter permethrin lotion (Nix)
  + Do not use in children under 6 months of age
  + Follow directions on the package
  + Medicine should be applied by an adult
  + Apply to shampooed, towel-dried hair
  + Rinse off after 10 minutes
  + Carefully comb through the hair removing **ALL** nits, tedious but necessary process
    - Keep your child busy with a game or movie
    - Section off small portions of the hair starting at the base of the neck and secure the rest with a clip
    - Begin at scalp and comb outward to remove the nits
    - Keep hair damp during the process
    - Clean the comb with a tissue after each use and place paper towel inside of a sealable plastic bag
    - Work section by section until you have finished the entire scalp
    - If you still see nits when you’re done, continue to comb through
    - Always double check!
  + Second application is 7-10 days after the first
  + If Nix is not effective after 2 treatments (7 days apart), call the office for a prescription medication and directions

Preventing the spread at home after head lice is discovered:

* Wash all recently worn clothes, towels, hats, and bed linens in hot water and dry on high heat
* Items that cannot be washed can be sealed in a plastic bag for 2 weeks
* Check and treat all family members

Other helpful hints:

* Carefully check your child’s head after attending a sleepover or camp
* Children can return to school after one treatment of Nix
* In between Nix treatments you can apply olive oil to the head before bed, cover with shower cap (in older children), and comb through hair again in the morning to remove any missed nits