

Recommended Guidelines for the Control of Pediculus Capitis (Head Lice) In the Home Setting

Checklist for Treating Head Lice

	Week 1	Week 2
1. Shampoo all affected family members with a head lice shampoo (examples: Rid, Nix or pharmacy brand lice shampoos). Follow directions and precautions on label.	_____	_____
2. After shampooing, comb the hair well with a fine tooth lice comb to remove eggs/nits from hair. This takes time and should be repeated for several days until all nits are removed. Remove remaining nits by hand may be necessary. Slide the nit up the hair shaft to dislodge it.	_____	_____
3. Change into freshly washed clothes after shampooing and combing.	_____	_____
4. Change and wash all sheets, pillowcases and blankets in hot, soapy water and machine dry on hot setting.	_____	_____
5. Wash all previously worn clothes, coats, hats with hot soapy water; dry in a hot dryer	_____	_____
6. Place clothes, bedding & stuffed toys that cannot be washed in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks (any lice will die without human blood to feed on and eggs cannot hatch without body heat)	_____	_____
7. Soak all combs, brushes, barrettes, ribbons in lice shampoo for one hour or soak for 5-10 min in 130 degree water.	_____	_____
8. Vacuum rugs, chairs, couches, mattresses to remove hidden lice and nits.	_____	_____
9. Check all family member's hair each week for signs of head lice (itching, grey insect, white egg or nit).		
10. Avoid hanging coats, hats, etc., in large closets with other people's clothing at school, church, nursery or day care.		
11. If possible, help friends, relatives or neighbors to look for and control head lice.		

Nit Removal Process

Nit removal from hair requires the aid of another person. Equipment needed:

- one sheet or large towel
 - hair dryer
 - sink or shower to wash hair
 - one regular comb
 - hair clips
 - one nit comb
 - Paper towels or toilet paper
 - Good lighting and magnifying lens
1. Wet hair. Place a sheet or large towel under a chair and place the infested person in the chair.
 2. Part the hair into four sections and pin with clips.
 3. Pick up one section starting at the tops of this section, lift a one inch wide bunch of hair and place the teeth of the nit comb as close to scalp as possible. Make sure the teeth of the comb are deep into the strand of hair. Pull the nit comb through the strand of hair.
 4. Nits that are difficult to remove may be scraped off by moving the nit comb up and down the hair shaft starting at the scalp. Wipe the comb off, with a tissue, after each stroke through the hair.
 5. Pin back each section of hair after removing the nits.
 6. Repeat steps 5-7 to the remaining 3 sections of hair. If the hair becomes dry, dampen with a little water.
 7. After picking all the lice and nits you can see, rinse the hair with water to wash out any loose nits.
 8. Dry the hair with a clean towel or hair dryer, and then check the entire head for nits you may have missed.
 9. Have the person who was treated change into clean clothing.
 10. If you are treating more than one person –pour boiling water over the nit comb, hair clips, and regular comb or let soak for 10 min in 130 degree water before treating the next person.
 11. Wash the sheet, towels clothing the person was wearing.
 12. Flush the toilet paper and seal paper towels in a bag and place in trash.
 13. Repeat this process for two weeks, even if you don't see nits!

Leaving nits, especially ones that are close to the scalp (within ¼ inch from scalp) will lead to a re-infestation of lice within 10 days. Note that nits that are lower on the hair shaft (greater than a ¼ inch) are most likely non-viable or empty egg shells. Eggs require the heat of the scalp to hatch.

Frequently Asked Questions about Pediculosis (Head Lice)

Q. What types of shampoos/treatments are available for head lice?

A. Pyrethrin-based products (such as Rid or A-200) Permethrins (such as NIX) are available over the counter and can be repeated in 7-10 days. These products are available in generic pharmacy brands as well. Lindane (such as Kwell) products require a prescription and should not be used on infants, children under 6 years of age and pregnant women.

****The instructions on the product must be followed exactly to be effective. They can have harmful side effects if used excessively or improperly.**

****Under no circumstances should treatment consist of flammable products such as kerosene or pesticides used to treat insects other than lice. They are highly dangerous and not effective.**

Q. How often do I need to check my child's head for new nits or lice?

A. All family members should be checked every 1-2 days for several weeks if one of them has been identified as having an active case of lice.

Q. How do lice spread from one person to another?

A. Direct or indirect head to head contact. Indirect contact can be through the sharing of clothes, hats, brushes, combs, hair clips or headbands.

Q. Do lice fly or jump from person to person?

A. Lice do not have hind legs and cannot jump. They do not have wings and cannot fly. They must crawl from person to person and because lice need to feed every few hours they are rarely found crawling off of a head. Brushing and hair drying can dislodge lice and fling them into the air. With close head contact (most common with sleepovers and sharing of clothes and hats) lice can travel from one person to another.

Q. How long can lice live off a human host?

A. Lice will die in 1-3 days without human blood.

Q. How can I distinguish nits (eggs) from other white flakes in the hair?

A. Dandruff or flakes from hair grooming products can resemble nits. Nits (eggs) are firmly attached to an individual hair shaft. Generally, if the object can be easily flicked from the hair with the finger, it is not a nit.

Q. Is there anyone who should not use lice shampoo/treatment?

A. Yes. Consult your pharmacist or physician before using a lice treatment if the person is pregnant, nursing, has allergies, skin conditions, asthma, epilepsy, or other pre-existing medical conditions.

Q. Why do I need to spend the time to remove all the nits?

A. No lice shampoo or treatment can kill all the eggs. Removing the nits will help prevent a re-infestation with lice. If 1 nit survives the treatment and is not removed, the louse will hatch, mature and lay eggs causing a re-infestation.

Q. Should I spray my house?

A. Lice don't hide in building cracks like cockroaches, fleas and ants. Treating homes or schools with bug sprays or other pesticides would be a waste of money and could harm your family at home or children and teachers at school. Thoroughly vacuuming your carpet, car upholstery, mattresses, and fabric furniture should be sufficient