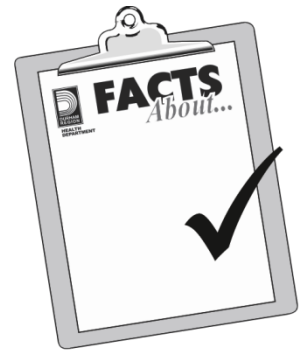




FACTS

About...



HEALTH DEPARTMENT



Pediculosis (Head Lice)

What is it?

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp of human beings. Head lice can be found on the hair very close to the scalp, behind the ears, back of the neck or behind the bangs. The saliva from head lice may cause itching. Head lice are a nuisance, but rarely cause health problems. They have nothing to do with lack of cleanliness.

How is it spread?

Anyone can get head lice. They are very common among school-aged children or children attending day care. They spread mainly through direct head to head (hair-to-hair) contact or through indirect contact from items such as shared hats, combs, hairbrushes, hair accessories and headphones. They don't fly or hop, but they crawl very quickly. Head lice can't live on pets, such as cats and dogs.

What do I look for?

- The first symptoms are itching and scratching of the head. However, some people do not itch at all.
- Scratch marks may be seen on the neck and scalp and may look like a rash.
- Adult lice are the size of a sesame seed, greyish-brown in colour. They move fast and are hard to see.
- The nits are easily seen and are firmly attached to the hair shaft close to the scalp.
- Nits are grayish-white in colour and oval in shape.
- Nits may look like dandruff but are not easily removed.
- Nits hatch in 7-10 days and lice survive for about 1-2 days away from the scalp.

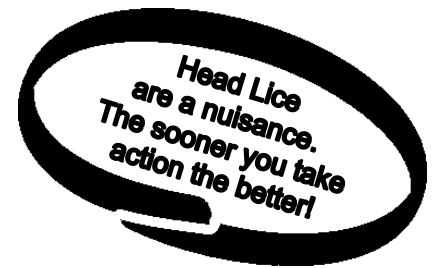
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For more information

Durham Region Health Department

905-666-6241 1-800-841-2729 durham.ca

If you require this information in an accessible format, contact 1-800-841-2729.



Where to look and how to check:

- Look for nits by parting the hair in small sections, going from one side of the head to the other.
- Look closely near the scalp, back of the neck or under the bangs.
- Look also at the top of the head and eyebrows.
- Good lighting is important (natural light may help you see them better). Use a magnifying glass if you have one.
- Check all family members.

How is it treated?

- Treating head lice may require two treatments, applied about 1 week apart, to kill newly hatched lice.
- After the second treatment, check the head every 2 to 3 days for 2 to 3 weeks to ensure all lice and nits are gone.
- Head lice products can be purchased without a prescription at the drugstore. It is important to use the product as directed and consult the pharmacist.
- Consult your health care provider before applying head lice products to pregnant or nursing women, to those with allergies, asthma or epilepsy, or to children under 2.
- Removing nits after treatment helps make it easier to see new infestations. To help remove nits use a special fine-tooth comb to comb them out. Nits can also be removed by running hair strands between your thumb and fingernail. Put the nits in a plastic bag, tie it up and throw away. Wash your hands with soap and water afterwards.
- Treat all those affected in your household at the same time.
- If your child has head lice, be sure that his/her school or day care and children's group is aware so that the parents can check their children. Also, tell the parents of your child's playmates.
- Wash bedding, clothing and personal items used within the last 2 days before treatment starts in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 15 minutes. The heat of the water or a hot drying cycle will kill any live lice and nits.
- Personal items (such as stuffed toys) that cannot be exposed to heat should be dry-cleaned or stored in air-tight plastic bags for 2 weeks.

How can I protect myself?

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats and headphones.
- Talk to your child about avoiding head to head (hair-to-hair) contact.
- Long hair should be tied in a ponytail.

July 4, 2016

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