



Getting Rid of Head Lice

Information for Parents



About Head Lice: Head lice are about the size of a sesame seed and can easily be seen when looking through a child's hair. The most common symptom is itching and irritation of the scalp and skin. Head lice stay near the scalp, often behind the ears, near the neckline, and back of the head. They hold tightly to the hair with hook-like claws at the end of each of their six legs. Head lice cannot fly or hop, they move by crawling. It is estimated that between 8 and 12 million children get head lice each year.

Do not be embarrassed if your child gets head lice. Anyone can get head lice. Getting head lice has nothing to do with a person's socioeconomic background or cleanliness. Head lice are not a serious medical condition and can easily be treated.

Parents or guardians of a child with head lice should promptly notify the child's school, day care, and the parents of their child's friends. The child will also need to be excluded from attending school or day care until after the first treatment with a medicated head lice treatment product (available by prescription or over-the-counter).

Treatment

Medicated shampoos or cream rinses are used to kill head lice. They are available from your doctor or over-the-counter. Regardless of whether or not you use an over-the-counter product or a prescribed treatment, it is very important that you read and carefully follow directions on the products label.



General Guidelines for Treating Head Lice

- Apply the lice medicine (or pediculicide) according to the instructions on the products box or label.
- Do not use a cream rinse, combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner on the hair before using the lice medicine.
- It is recommended that both the person getting treated and the person administering the treatment put on clean clothing after the treatment is completed.
- Be cautious not to use more than one head lice medication at time.
- 8-12 hours after treatment, examine your child's head again. If you see a few lice still around, but they are moving more slowly than before, do not re-treat. Comb the dead lice and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit/lice comb.
- To comb through the hair, sit in a well lighted area. Part the hair into small sections and comb through one section at a time. Be patient and thorough, it can take a lot of time.
- 8-12 hours after treatment, if no dead lice are found and lice appear to be as active as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not re-treat until speaking with your health care provider. Your health care provider may recommend using a different lice medicine.
- It is important to check the hair and comb through it with a nit comb every 2-3 days. This will help to remove nits and lice and can decrease the chance of self re-infestation. Do this for 2-3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.
- Re-treatment is generally recommended for most lice medicines after 9-10 days. This should kill any newly hatched lice before they produce new eggs. Be sure to follow the instructions for the product you are using.
- Wash combs, brushes, hats and other hair accessories of the affected person in hot water.



For more information about head lice
call 801-538-6191 or visit www.health.utah.gov/epi

