



Fact Sheet

HEADLICE *Head lice are small insects which live on the human scalp and cling to the hair. They cannot be removed by washing or wetting the hair. Nits are the empty white egg cases*

What are Head Lice?

Head lice are small insects which live on the human scalp and cling to the hair. They cannot be removed by washing or wetting the hair. Nits are the empty white egg cases of the hatched lice. They look like dandruff but are firmly attached to hair.

Non-treatment of head lice can lead to sores and infection of the scalp from scratching.

Head lice are a common nuisance in preschool and young school age children.

Check for Lice

Check for lice while brushing your child's hair or if your child is scratching his or her head frequently.

Use a fine tooth comb on wet hair and check especially around the hairline at the back of the neck, over the crown of the head and behind the ears.

If you find fresh nits or adult lice then treat as follows.

Treatment Options

Malathion liquid or Permethrin cream (a natural insecticide derived from chrysanthemums) are useful treatments.

The liquid or cream **MUST BE LEFT ON OVERNIGHT** (or twelve hours).

Hair should be washed normally the next morning and bed linen changed.

Repeat the overnight treatment 7 days later and then again after another 7 days. (3 treatments in total).

Malathion liquid should not be used on children younger than 6 months.

Permethrin cream should not be used on children younger than 2 months.

Shampoo or spray treatments are ineffective because of being too dilute or of too short a contact time.

A less accepted alternative treatment is fine tooth combing of wet, conditioned hair for a period of 30 minutes every four days for two weeks although there is less evidence of effectiveness for this method.

Prevent Head Lice Spread

Don't share brushes or combs, bedding or towels.

Don't share headgear, bike helmets or hats (head lice can survive 2-3 days away from the scalp).

Check all other family members if lice are found.

Notify school, preschool and friends so that other families can be alert.

Daily brushing prevents the establishment of head lice. Damaged headlice will not mate and lay eggs. The brush needs to have firm bristles that reach the scalp as head lice have very strong claws that latch onto the hair near the scalp.

Combing with a fine tooth comb can be useful.

Check your children's heads every couple of weeks to detect any possible re-infection.

PREVENTION IS IMPORTANT

For problems with diagnosis or treatment see your Pegasus Family Practice.

