

## **PEDICULOSIS (Information for Parents)**

### **1. What is pediculosis (head lice)?**

Pediculosis is the presence of head lice on the scalp. Head lice are tiny insects, 2 to 4 mm long and greyish or yellowish in colour. The head louse cannot fly nor jump. The louse and its nits (lice eggs) are usually found behind the ears, on the nape of the neck or on the top of the head. It lays its eggs close to the scalp; the egg is oval, whitish-greyish in colour and attached to the hair shaft. It's important not to confuse the eggs with dandruff which is easily brushed off the hair and does not stick. A louse can live 48 hours away from the scalp. Its food is human blood; therefore, it can not live on an animal or a plant.

### **2. How do I tell if my child has lice or nits?**

Often, the child will complain of itching. You will need a very bright light to examine the scalp and find lice, nits and scratch marks.

### **3. How does my child catch lice?**

Head lice are caught when there is head to head contact between children. Lice are transmitted by direct contact with infested hair or through the exchange of personal items such as combs, hair brushes, hats, scarves, headphones, bed linens, towels and sweaters.

### **4. What do I need to do if my child catches lice?**

- 4.1 Inform the school, kindergarten, daycare and the people who have had direct contact with your child.
- 4.2 Consult a pharmacist for the best treatment to use and follow directions on the bottle.
- 4.3 Do not apply the solution on open wounds.
- 4.4 After the treatment, ensure that all nits are eliminated and check hair every day for at least 3 weeks in order to prevent another infestation.
- 4.5 Examine the head of everyone in your household.
- 4.6 Treat only those persons who have lice and/or nits.
- 4.7 Your child can return to school after treatment if there are no more living lice. Check for lice by meticulously examining the scalp.

\*\* For children under 2, pregnant women, women who are breastfeeding and people with problem skin, ask a doctor or pharmacist for the best product to use.

Because the products sometimes do not kill nits, check the scalp every day to destroy hatched nits and living lice. Consult a pharmacist or doctor if live lice is found after a treatment. Some manufacturers recommend a second treatment after 7 to 10 days.

## **5. How do I get rid of nits?**

After a treatment, the following suggestions may help you get rid of nits (unless the product used does not recommend them):

- 5.1 Apply a humid towel on the scalp for 30 minutes to one hour;
- 5.2 Apply an ordinary conditioner to hair;
- 5.3 Use very bright lighting;
- 5.4 Comb hair with a louse comb (tight-toothed metallic comb). Comb from the scalp to the end of the hair shaft. Plunge comb in hot water after each comb-through.
- 5.5 To get rid of a stubborn nit that resists the louse comb, grab it with the nails of your thumb and forefinger and slide along the hair.
- 5.6 Getting a hair cut is not necessary. Personal items regularly used by the infested person (i.e.: comb, hair brush, hat, bed linen) can be cleaned by using one of the following methods:
  - Soak in a non-diluted lice shampoo for 10 minutes;
  - Soak in hot water (140° F or 60° C) for 20 minutes;
  - Place in a hot dryer for 20 minutes;
  - Dry clean; or
  - Store personal effects in a sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks. It is not recommended that you spray insecticides in your house, on your furniture or any other object in your surroundings as this method may be toxic for people and animals. Instead of using insecticides, vacuum thoroughly and throw the used bag away.

## **6. How do I prevent a head lice infestation?**

- 6.1 Store your scarf and hat in the sleeve of your coat;
- 6.2 Keep long hair tied up or braided,
- 6.3 Do not lend or borrow personal effects (hair brush, comb, sweater, hat, scarf);
- 6.4 Check hair at every washing or once a week;

**6.5** Check hair when returning from summer or winter vacation, summer camp and school activities outside the school;

**6.6** Do not use treatment shampoos as regular shampoo nor as a preventative measure.

It will not help to find out who has infested the school and to blame them, as it could be your own child! To avoid traumatizing the children and to prevent the alienation of infested children, avoid any and all judgement. Help us to help you!

For more information on pediculosis, please contact your health clinic.