

Head Lice

Head lice are parasitic insects found on the human head. Head lice are becoming increasingly common in Alaska. They are transmitted directly from person to person or indirectly through objects such as hairbrushes, hats, scarves, clothing, bed sheets, and pillowcases. Lice are most commonly found on the scalp, behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the neck.



If you look closely at the scalp and see small, pearl/gray eggs firmly attached to the hair shaft your child has nits (eggs) and may also have live crawling lice, so look carefully as they can be more difficult to see. Nits (eggs) are most often found on hairs at the crown of the head, at the nape of the neck and behind the ears, but they may be laid anywhere. Sometimes dandruff and hair products look similar, if you are unsure, please contact me for assistance.

Lice do not cause disease or infection, but are a nuisance! Lice are transmitted directly from person to person (most common) or indirectly through personal objects such as hairbrushes, hats, scarves, clothing, sheets and pillowcases. Away from people, head lice can live for only a short time; they must have a human head to live on to survive and hatch eggs.

Current research indicates that lice and their nits are becoming more resistant to available lice treatments. Re-infestation may occur if only one viable nit remains on the hair shaft. After treatment, nits are removed by scraping them off the entire length of the hair. Special fine-tooth combs are available, but it is common practice to "nit pick" through the hair after treatment to remove nits. **Children with head lice may return to school once they have been treated and are live lice free, but still need to stop by the nurses' office for a head check.**

10 STEPS TO STAYING AHEAD OF LICE:

1. Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head-scratching. Anyone can get lice from another person or sharing hats, brushes, combs, etc.
2. Check all family members for lice and nits (lice eggs) at least once a week. (It helps to use natural light and a magnifying glass)
3. Treat only those family members who have lice. Buy a lice product at your drug store, the pharmacy section of your food store or call your doctor for a prescription.
4. Call your doctor first if you are pregnant, nursing or allergic to weeds, plants, etc. Never use a lice product on your baby!
5. Follow package directions carefully! Keep the eyes covered with a washcloth.
6. Remove all nits (which will stay on the hair after treatment.) This is essential! You do this with a special lice comb, scissors or your fingernails.
7. Wash sheets and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer. Combs and brushes may be soaked in hot (not boiling) water for 10 minutes.
8. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to control lice on mattresses, rugs, furniture, and stuffed animals.
9. Continue to check head every day for 2-3 weeks to make sure head lice are gone. Regular checking is the best prevention.
10. When you find a case of lice, tell others! Call your child's school or daycare. Notify neighborhood parents and parents of children your child has recently been in contact with.

