



Important Information about Head Lice

The Northville Public Schools does not endorse any specific lice treatments. This information is intended to help you and your health care professional decide the best course of treatment for your child.

Diligently removing all the nits is the only effective way to get rid of lice. It is also important to let your child's school and playmates know if your child has lice. The best way to keep it from spreading or re-infesting your child is for all known cases to be treated as soon as possible.

The Basics

Lice do not jump or fly. The only way to get them is from direct contact.

They need to feed from a human scalp to survive.

Lice are a nuisance, but they do not carry disease and are not a sign of poor hygiene.

They do not live on your pets. You cannot get lice from your pets or give lice to them.

Unfortunately there is no miracle product to control lice. Over the counter lice products (used properly) will generally kill the live lice, but the nits (eggs) are much more difficult to get rid of. Do not treat anyone with medicated lice products unless **live** lice or viable nits are seen. These products are pesticides and can be harmful if overused. They do not prevent anyone from getting lice, even if a family member has it. They only kill live lice.

To check for lice and nits, use good light and start behind the ears and the back of the scalp. Lice move quickly and are sometimes difficult to see. They are typically dark brown or black in color. They can be seen anywhere on the head. Nits are oval shaped and white or gray in color. They are firmly attached to one side of the hair shaft. This is what makes them so difficult to get rid of. Dandruff, lint or other hair debris will be much easier to remove. Nits are commonly seen close to the scalp.

Pictures of lice and nits and an 8 minute informational video can be found at the University of Nebraska website lancaster.unl.edu/pest/lice/

It is not necessary to cut your child's hair. It can be very traumatic to them to get their hair cut and will not eliminate the problem. Long hair is more time-consuming to treat, but cutting hair can further damage the child's self-esteem.



Treatments

It is always a good idea to check with your health care provider before using any lice products (even over the counter treatments). When choosing a treatment, keep in mind that most treatments carry some risk. Read and follow the package directions exactly.

1. Do not use lice products on anyone less than 2 years old.
2. Do not apply the products if you are pregnant or nursing.
3. If you or the affected family member have health issues, such as allergies, asthma, seizures or immune deficiency disorders, contact a health care professional before using any lice products.
4. Use lice products in a basin or sink rather than in the tub or shower. This will decrease the exposure to the rest of the body.
5. Do not use the same product more than twice. If you follow the directions, and it doesn't work, consult a health care professional for other options.
6. Do not mix lice products.

There are many "home remedies" and treatments available. These treatments mainly work to suffocate or immobilize the live lice. They do not kill the nits. Most are not proven and some can be dangerous. Diligently removing all the nits is the only effective way to get rid of lice.

1. Some families have found success using olive oil applied to the scalp and hair. It should help loosen the nits and restore oils lost from lice treatments, but it must be applied liberally to the hair and scalp. If used alone, it should remain on the head under a plastic shower cap for 3-8 hours. A bandana may help keep the shower cap in place. Be very careful if allowing the child to sleep with a shower cap on, as it will be slippery and can pose a danger of suffocation.
2. There are descriptions on the internet using Cetaphil skin cleanser. It is allowed to dry on the hair and suffocates the lice. It must remain on the hair for several hours. These results are preliminary.
3. Tea Tree Oil is found in some shampoos, and is reported to discourage lice. Concentrated Tea Tree Oils can be harmful to young children if absorbed through the scalp. Check with your health care provider before using these products.
4. Mayonnaise has been used to suffocate lice; however, it can turn rancid if it is left on long enough to be effective. It may also attract the family pet and make them sick if they eat it.
5. Vaseline is effective, but it is extremely difficult to remove from the hair.
6. Kerosene and gasoline were once popular remedies, but these are EXTREMELY dangerous and should never be used.
7. Insecticides intended for use on your pets or other household purposes should not be used on your child.



Nit Picking

In order to be free of lice, all nits (lice eggs) must be removed. If they remain in the hair, they will hatch in 7-10 days and start the infestation again. They are difficult to remove, but here are some tips.

1. Lice Combs – many different types are sold in stores. The type that works the best is metal with long teeth. Many kits sold with lice products are plastic and will not do a good job. A regular comb can be used first to remove tangles, but to effectively remove the nits the teeth must be rigid and very close together.
2. A conditioner or olive oil may be put on the hair to help the comb move easily through the hair and to loosen the nits. It may also slow down any remaining lice and allow you to comb them out. If you have used a lice product, make certain the instructions do not tell you to avoid washing the hair for a specific period of time.
3. Assemble the following supplies
 - Lice comb
 - Box of facial tissue
 - Large towel to place around the child's shoulders during combing
 - Bowl of water with dishwashing liquid added (to drown any lice combed out)
 - Bobby pins or hair clips for long hair
 - An inexpensive pair of magnifying glasses (reading glasses) may help to see the lice/nits better
 - Work in an area with good lighting
 - A movie or game to entertain the child during the treatment.
4. Find a comfortable seating position for you and your child. You should be slightly higher than your child.
5. Remove tangles with a regular hair comb. Separate the hair into small sections. Insert the lice comb as close as possible to the scalp and pull gently through the hair several times. Check the hair carefully. Pin the hair in a curl flat against the head. Dip the comb into the soapy water and use the tissue to remove any lice or debris. Continue until the entire head has been thoroughly combed and checked.
6. After combing, flush the contents of the bowl down the toilet.
7. Unless the lice product instructions tell you not to, shampoo the hair at least twice to remove any residual oil.
8. Recheck the hair once it is dry to check for any nits missed the first time. Remove these with small scissors or scrape the remaining nits off the hair shaft with your fingernails.
9. Boil the nit comb for 15 minutes and clean any remaining debris with an old toothbrush or dental floss before using on another family member.



Cleaning the Environment

1. VACUUM furniture and carpets – the most effective means to remove lice and nits
2. Do not use insecticide sprays
3. Launder bedding, clothing and washable toys in hottest water possible and dry in the dryer for at least 20 minutes.
4. Seal – any items that cannot be vacuumed, washed or dry cleaned can be put in a plastic bag for 2 weeks. If the temperature is below freezing outside, they can be kept outside for 24 hours to kill any lice or nits.
5. Upholstery in a car can be vacuumed or cleaned with a lint remover. Discard the used lint remover sheets immediately in the trash.

Prevention

The best ways to prevent lice is to communicate with your child's school, and playmates. If all affected children are treated at the same time, the chance of re-infestation will be decreased.

- Remind your children not to share hats, helmets, combs, brushes or pretty hair accessories.
- Store hats in the sleeve of your coat or in your backpack
- Girls with longer hair may choose to wear ponytails or braids.

For more information, here are some helpful web sites.

- National Pediculosis Association - www.headlice.org
- Harvard School of Public Health- www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html
- Oakland County Health Department www.oakgov.com/health/assets/documents/fs_headlice/pdf
- University of Nebraska – <http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/lice/>
- Centers for Disease Control - www.cdc.gov/ncidod/parasites/lice/default.htm
- Kids Health – www.kidshealth.org/parent then type "lice" in the search box
- Michigan Head Lice Manual – www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Michigan_Head_Lice_Manual_103750_7.pdf