



Miami School

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Oct 6, 2015

Dear Parents/Guardians,

It has been brought to our attention that head lice has once again begun to surface in the community and in the school. This is not unusual for this time of year (the beginning of January and the Spring are also very common key times that seem to require extra-diligence).

As always, it is important to remember that while lice are a nuisance, they do not pose any health issues and are not a reflection of a person's hygiene or self-care. Anyone can be unlucky enough to pick up lice in almost any public location without even realizing it. As you will be aware from the news, lice, along with bed bugs and other such pests are on the rise almost everywhere and are simply a reality of life that we need to be aware of, informed on how to best prevent and treat when it occurs, and above all remain kind and helpful towards one another when it occurs.

The most helpful thing at the school level is for everyone to do their part in regularly checking for signs and for treating thoroughly if detected. I have taken the time to re-teach students some of the basics about detection and prevention.

Early detection is extremely helpful in cutting down the effort that will ultimately be required to bring a case of head lice to a successful close.

Please help us to ensure that we do not arrive at a more widespread issue by taking the time to very thoroughly check your child(ren)'s hair this evening, and to keep checking daily for at least the next two weeks.

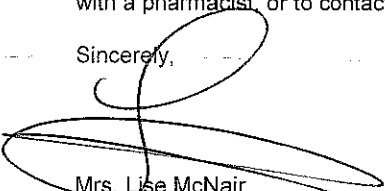
Keep in mind that you should be on the look-out for nits rather than for live lice when you are examining your child's hair. A reminder that live lice are very difficult to spot. What you will be able to see instead are the nits (eggs). Nits appear as tiny sesame seed sized droplets (white, clear or brown) which are firmly "glued" to the hair shaft. (As opposed to dandruff or hair spray residue which brushes off very easily).

If you do find any lice or nits, the following steps will need to be taken before your child returns to school:

- Pick up a commercial head lice shampoo or treatment (available at any pharmacy) and carefully follow the directions on the product.
- Once the hair has been treated with the product, you will also need to manually remove all nits by sliding them off with your fingers and/or pulling out the individual hair with the nit on it (nit combs can help if they are fine enough, but rarely get all of the nits)
- Soak family combs, brushes, hair clips, etc in very hot water & vinegar for a min of 15 minutes
- Launder bed linens (use hot water and dryer on hot setting)
- Launder recently worn clothing (especially jackets/sweaters, hats, etc)
- Vacuum areas within the home where there may have been head contact (couches, car seats, etc)
- Place items that can not be easily laundered (eg. stuffed toys) either in a hot dryer for 20 minutes, frozen for 24 hours, or sealed in a plastic bag for 10 days.

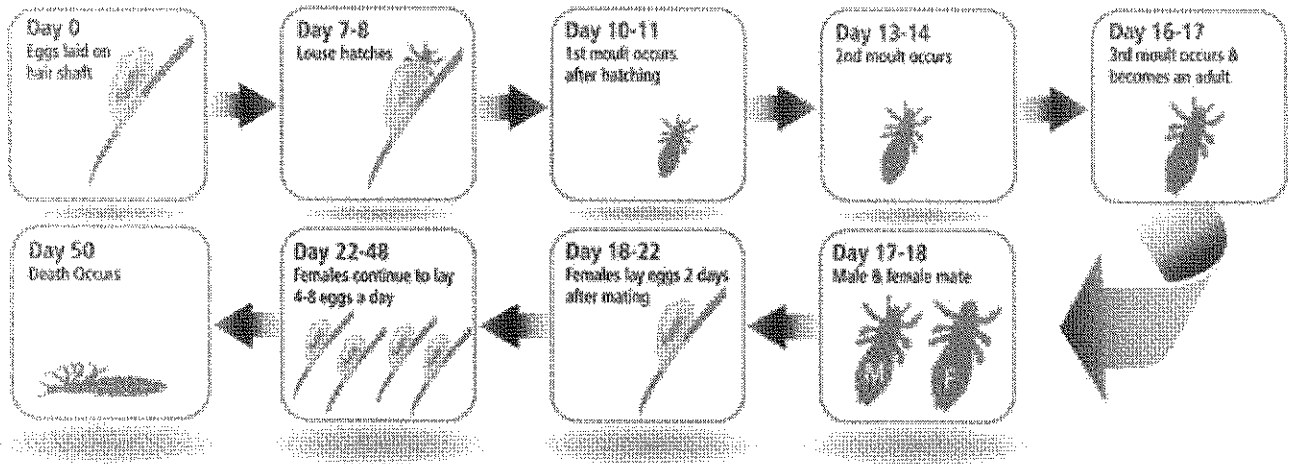
Attached for your reference is a handout with further helpful information regarding treatment and prevention. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to consult with a pharmacist, or to contact the school or public health.

Sincerely,


Mrs. Lise McNair
Principal

Life Cycle of Head Lice & Eggs

The head louse develops in three stages: egg (nit), larvae or nymph (1-2 mm long) and adult.



When treating head lice infestations, it is essential to effectively combat the lice at all stages of development, i.e. the adult louse, larvae and eggs (nits) to make sure that you eradicate the problem.

The cycle from egg to adult (i.e. capable of producing its first batch of eggs) is generally around three weeks. Their development is dependent on environmental temperature and humidity. The optimum temperature for the development of lice is 32°C.

Using a water-insoluble 'glue', the adult female attaches the oval 0.8 mm-long eggs (nits) onto the hair shaft, close to the base of the hair. The eggs are encased in a shell of chitin. It then takes 7-8 days for the larvae to hatch.

Adult lice emerge from the larval stage within 9-12 days³ and are then ready to reproduce after a further 2-3 days.

Throughout her life cycle, the female louse can produce 150 to 300 eggs.

References: 3. Head Lice Treatment, Canadian Pediatric Society Guidelines. Update 2008.

<http://www.nyda.ca/en/about-head-lice/life-cycle-of-head-lice-eggs/>

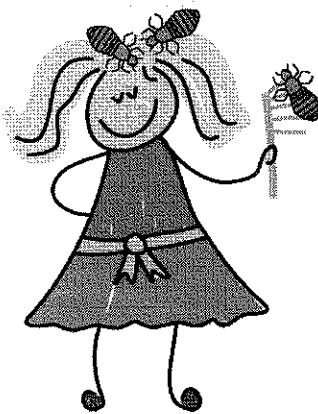
The Facts of Lice

Head lice are small insects that live in people's hair and feed on their blood. Lice glue their eggs—which are called "nits"—to the hair near the scalp, so they can't get brushed off. The nits are small, whitish and oval, and may look like dandruff. In very light hair, they may look cream or tan-coloured.

Lice are very common, and anyone can get them, though they most commonly affect children. Lice don't spread disease, and having head lice is not a sign of uncleanliness or poor hygiene. If someone has head lice, their scalp will be very itchy.

Let's look at some other facts about head lice:

- Lice are smaller than sesame seeds, have 6 legs and can move very quickly.
- Lice only live where they are warm and are usually found where there is a lot of hair, especially behind the ears and on the back of the neck.
- Lice are clear in colour when hatched. Seven to 10 days after hatching, they become adult lice, which are able to lay eggs.
- Lice need human blood to live and multiply, and they look reddish brown after feeding.
- Lice do not hop, jump, or fly.
- Lice bites cause itching.
- Lice can live up to 48 hours off the human body.
- Pets cannot get head lice and people cannot get head lice from pets.



What should you do when someone has head lice?

- If you or your child has lice or nits in your hair you should do something about it the same day.
- If you or your child has lice, he or she may spread it to someone else in the family, neighbourhood or school unless they are properly treated.
- Notify others who have been in direct contact (head to head or sharing hair brushes, headgear, etc.) with your child. Remember to include schools, day cares, friends, relatives and neighbours.
- Make sure you check everyone in your family for nits or head lice. This should be done daily for 14 days. Only treat those family members where lice and/or nits are found and treat all persons at the same time.
- Do not use a lice treatment unless lice or nits have been found in that person's hair.
- A child may return to school or day care after the first treatment is done and headgear, combs, brushes, etc. have been cleaned.

Head lice are spread by:

- Head to head contact with someone who has head lice.
- Sharing things that are in direct contact with a person's hair such as combs, brushes, barrettes, ribbons, caps, hats, scarves, helmets, towels, pillows and coats.
- Children age 5 to 12 get lice more easily because their heads often touch when they play together.

How do you prevent head lice?

- Lice have trouble living in very short hair. Tie long hair back in a braid or pony tail. This makes it harder for lice to crawl from one person to another.
- Do not share things like pillows, towels, coats, caps, hats, or hair accessories.
- Keep children in separate beds on sleepovers. Change the sheets when a different person will be using them.

How do you know if your child has head lice?

- Check your child's head in bright or natural light on a regular basis, and most importantly, if you receive a letter from your child's class informing you of a case of head lice in the classroom.
- Look for nits by parting hair in small sections with a pointed object that will not scratch the scalp.
- Look close to the scalp for new nits.
- Check all the hair carefully; go from one side of the head to the other.
- Brush hair over a sink or towel.
- Hair conditioner that is white in colour may help make eggs and lice easier to see but the conditioner must be completely removed before head lice treatment is used.
- Nit combs can be used to find lice.

One of the first signs of head lice is itching and scratching of the head. Adult lice move quickly, are different sizes and are hard to see. You may see the nits first.

(Treatment and Cleaning on next page)

Treatment

It is important to follow all the treatment and cleaning steps outlined below on the same day.

- Do not treat unless there are lice and/or nits.
- You can buy supplies from the drug store. Sprays to clean the environment are not necessary.
- Make sure you have enough treatment for everyone in the family who needs it.
- Some lice products are NIX™, R&C™, and Kwellada-P™.
- R&C™ is recommended for children under 2 years of age and pregnant and breastfeeding women.
- Natural and alternative treatments are not recommended until more studies show that they work.
- Nit combs should not be used alone to get rid of lice and nits but should be used with the lice product.

Please follow the package instructions, as each type of treatment is different.

- No treatment will kill all the nits when used for the first time.
- Wash the hair with plain shampoo (no conditioners, etc.), baby shampoo, or dishwashing soap before treatment.
- Most lice treatments should be repeated after seven days. This includes NIX™ and Kwellada-P™.
- Do not use less of the treatment than recommended. It will not work. Be sure to saturate the whole head of hair.
- Use more product for very long hair or thick hair.

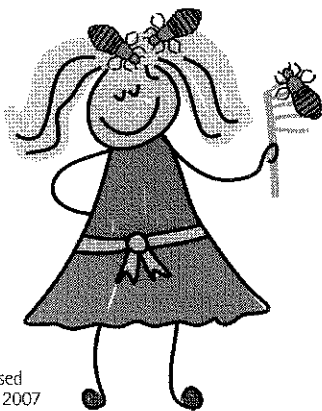
Removal of nits from the hair may be helpful as it makes it easier to see new lice and nits.

- Pull off each nit by grasping it with your fingernails and sliding it off the hair strand.
- Throw nits into a garbage bag and seal it.
- Wet combing and metal nit combs may help to remove the eggs and lice.
- Check for and remove nits daily for 2 weeks.

Cleaning

Do not wear the same clothes that were worn before treatment or sleep in the same bedding until the clothes and bedding are washed.

- Clothes or bedding that may have been in contact with infested hair should be washed in hot water before they are used again. They can also be put into a hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- Items like teddy bears or winter coats that cannot be washed or put into a hot dryer should be put into a sealed plastic bag for at least 10 days. They can also be dry cleaned or frozen for 48 to 72 hours.
- Combs and brushes should be put into hot water for 15 minutes.
- Vacuum the couch, car seats, the bed or any pillows that the hair may have touched in order to remove live lice or hair with nits.



Revised
July, 2007



Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg
Caring for Health À l'écoute de notre santé