



NURSE'S NOTES

LICE INFORMATION

LICE (Pediculosis)

Head lice are wingless, blood-sucking parasites of people. Head lice are human parasites and do not infest other animals. They are very small but can be seen with the naked eye. They are tan and about 2-3 mm in length (like a sesame seed). Adult female lice can live for about 3 weeks and may lay up to 10 eggs per day after mating. Eggs (referred to as nits) hatch in about one week, after which the nymphs (immature lice that resemble the adults) must have a blood meal within 24 hours. It will take 7-10 days for them to become adults.

How do you get lice? The most common way is by direct head-to-head contact. Children often spread lice to one another when they take naps or sleep together at night. Lice can also be spread through indirect contact such as sharing of towels, combs, brushes and other grooming aids. Hanging coats and scarves close together or piling them on top of each other can allow lice to spread from one person to another. However, lice cannot fly or jump. They normally die within two days after being detached from a person.

How do you diagnose? Diagnosis can be made by medically trained personnel or by knowledgeable people such as teachers or parents. Itching, tickling and scratching of the head is a common complaint. A good light source is necessary to observe the lice in hair. Separate the hair and especially look at the base of the head and behind the ears. Lice eggs are glued to the hairs and are oval and white to yellow (be sure it is not dry scalp flakes when examining). Lice eggs are not easy to flick off since they are glued to the hair.

How do you treat? The hair must be treated. A physician can prescribe prescription treatments, but over the counter products can also be used. The directions must be followed exactly and many times a second application is required. Another alternative treatment is from Nit Wits which uses heat which is more effective than chemical treatment. Nit Wit uses Louse Buster (lousebuster.com) to kill the lice and dry up the eggs. At Parkview Baptist School a physician's release statement must be brought to school if the chemical treatment was administered. If NitWits was used a confirmation form of this treatment must be brought to school. During infestation it is recommended that long hair be braided or up in a bun.

What about my home? Lice normally die within two days if they are detached from their host. Frequent vacuuming, laundering and regular house cleaning practices are normally sufficient. Insecticides are not recommended. Head lice do not transmit disease and sometimes get confused with body lice. All bedding, towels and clothing used by the infested individual should be washed in hot water or dry cleaned. Items that cannot be cleaned should be placed in plastic bags and sealed for two weeks. Soak combs and brushes for about one hour in

hot water with some type of sterilant such as rubbing alcohol or Lysol. Shampooing the hair with standard shampoos will not eliminate head lice.

Lice are brought to school by students – it does not originate at school. Lice are not wandering around in classrooms – they must have a blood host to survive. Having lice is more common than the common cold. Lice are seen most often after holidays when there is a lot of human contact and overnight slumber parties.

Shaving of the head is not necessary. Never use kerosene, gasoline or other such chemicals on the head.

Always notify the school and others who may have been in contact with the infested individual.