

THE CHECK

Lice are transparent, rust coloured after a blood meal and difficult to see. The female louse can lay up to 150 eggs in 10 days.

To perform a thorough check, sit in a well lit area such as a sunny window or under a brightly lit lamp. Lice do not like movement or light.

Divide the hair into sections and look carefully, one section at a time.

Look behind the ears, nape of the neck, hairline.

Only if you find nits (eggs) or lice, proceed with medicated treatment.

WHAT YOU MIGHT FIND ON THE HEAD

- nits (eggs)
- lice
- bites on the scalp
- excrement from lice (looks like flecks of dust)

NITS

Freshly laid lice eggs are half the size of the head of a pin. They are shaped like a tear drop and can be found close to the scalp, on the shaft of the hair, cemented to the hair so they cannot be blown or flicked off. They can feel like tiny knots on the hair.

Mature eggs are larger, the size of the head of a pin, more visible, creamy in colour and hatch in seven to 10 days.

All nits should be removed.

ACT QUICKLY

Check heads of all family members - anyone can get lice, even adults.

Don't forget to have your own head checked.

If you don't see lice or nits, continue to check the head regularly twice a week for one

Getting the facts of lice

month or more often if there is an outbreak in your child's school.

If your child has lice, tell anyone with whom your child has had contact to have their head checked, i.e. baby-sitter, grandparents, school mates, playmates, parents, playgroups/sports groups.

TREATING WITH MEDICATED SHAMPOOS

When using anti-lice products read directions and follow them carefully.

Timing is important. If the product is rinsed off too soon, lice and nits may not be killed. If left on too long, you're causing unnecessary exposure to the lice-killing chemicals.

Rinsing a child's hair under the tap (instead of a shower) will limit skin exposure and prevent the child from swallowing some of the products.

Products should not be used near the eyes, nose or mouth. A towel held tightly over the eyes protects during treatment.

When treating another person, wear plastic or rubber gloves to avoid unnecessary exposure to the product.

BE THOROUGH

After treating the hair, comb it to remove tangles. Part the hair into

four or more sections. Use a clip to hold each section. Focus on one section at a time, checking small amounts of hair.

Use your thumbnail against your first finger to strip the mite from the hair starting from the roots right down to the ends, then discard. Pin back that lock of hair and continue until all nits are removed.

Young eggs do not absorb the chemicals in treatment shampoos.

After treatment check for and remove all lice and eggs. Nit removal is painstaking, time consuming and a very frustrating task, but

must be done to prevent reinfestation.

To make eggs easier to remove, try rinsing the hair in equal parts white vinegar and water and applying a damp towel soaked in the same solution for 15 minutes.

Check for and remove all lice and nits morning and night for seven to 10 days.

Lice are not likely to abandon the warmth of the scalp to lurk in clothing, furniture and bed linen where it is cold and there is no food supply.

However, it is advised to wash bed linen in hot water and dry it in a hot dryer.

This information is provided by the York Region Health Services Department. For more information call 773-3230.

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