



HEAD LICE (PEDICULOSIS)

Date:

Dear Parent:

A child at day care has been diagnosed with **head lice**. Lice are small insects that spend their entire lives living on humans. Having lice is NOT A SIGN OF POOR HYGIENE HABITS. It is a result of exposure. Properly treated cases are no longer infectious.

Lice are spread easily by direct contact with the infested person or by sharing scarves, bed sheets, blankets, pillows, combs or brushes with a person who has lice. Lice do not jump or fly; they only crawl.

Animals do not spread human lice.

Lice cause the scalp to itch. Look for the lice or their eggs on the hair where the hair comes out of the scalp. Lice are small (less than 1/8 inch long), tan-colored insects, alive and moving. They prefer the back of the scalp, behind the ears and above the neck. The eggs (nits) are grey-white specks glued to the hair. Eggs more than 1/4 inch out on the hair shaft are generally dead or empty. Even if you cannot find the insects, lice must be there if the eggs are there, and treatment has not been performed.

To get rid of lice, use a medicated shampoo prescribed by your doctor or an over-the-counter, nonprescription product from the drug store. Carefully follow the directions on the shampoo container. A second treatment one week later is usually recommended.

Clean personal items by any of the following methods:

- Washing in hot water in washing machine. • Putting in hot dryer for 20 minutes.
- Dry cleaning. • Store in sealed plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- Soaking in 2% Lysol and water for one hour. • Freezing for 48 hours.
- Boiling combs, brushes, curlers, etc., for ten minutes.

Thorough vacuuming of carpeting, floors and furniture is all that is necessary in the rest of the household.

The insecticide sprays are not recommended.

Use a fine-tooth comb to remove nits after successful treatment. After two treatments, the removal of nits should not have any effect in preventing more lice as the eggs have either hatched or they are dead.

REMEMBER: Head lice are not choosy about who they infest. Anyone can get them. They cause no illness—only some inconvenience. The important thing is to treat promptly and thoroughly. Your cooperation is essential in preventing the spread of head lice.

If you have any questions, please call your local Health District office.