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LICE TREATMENT

WHAT DO THEY LOOK LIKE?

Live adult lice are the size of a sesame seed they vary in color between light brown to grayish black. They are wingless and have six legs. They cannot fly but can crawl pretty rapidly. Nits are the eggs that the adult louse lays and they are a small pearlescent teardrop shape which is adhered with cement-like substance to the hair shaft. It cannot be flicked off or brushed off easily. It is often hard to see the live lice and the hair should be examined in good light using a comb and dividing the hair into small sections

TREATMENT:

No longer recommended:

I no longer recommend Nix, Rid and Ovide as they have become ineffective. The lice have become resistant to the insecticide in these products. Overuse of these products can lead to toxic side effects.

Recommended:

Lice R Gone

I do recommend a non toxic shampoo called "Lice R Gone" which you can purchase in our office or online. The active ingredients in this shampoo are an enzyme (meat tenderizer) and peppermint oil. The enzyme helps to dissolve the nits as well as loosening it from the hair shaft, which, if you have ever tried nit picking before, you will truly appreciate. It also dehydrates the lice and effectively kills it. If you have used nix or rid this hardens the nits and it takes much longer to dissolve the nits.

Instructions for using Lice R Gone:

Place shampoo on wet hair and massage and lather thoroughly for 10 minutes. I recommend letting it sit on the hair for an additional 10 minutes for the enzymes to do their work.

I recommend that after rinsing out the shampoo you place a lot of conditioner to facilitate combing. While the hair is still wet, you will still need to carefully comb through the hair and remove any stray nits that may still be present either by pulling with your finger nails or snipping off that hair if it won't budge. Using a fine tooth comb is useful. Make sure you are in a good light and divide the hair in very thin sections.

You can also shampoo your child with the shampoo if he/she was exposed at school. This won't prevent infestations in the future but may take care of an undetected louse and nits. Checking is still imperative

Other safe and effective methods:

- Other methods include drying the hair with a hot hair dryer for approx 30 minutes as the lice will be killed at temperatures > 130F. Be very careful of scalding your child with the high heat
- Putting oil substance such as olive oil, mayonnaise, lotions or conditioners overnight with a shower cap will kill the lice but won't remove the nits. To soften the cement adhering the nit to the hair, soak the hair in vinegar/ conditioner for 30 minutes then nit pick.
- Keep long hair pulled in a pony tail and spray with hair spray for school during infestations. Washing with tea tree oil/peppermint oil shampoos will also deter lice infestations.

Check all household members daily. Remember that although this is an arduous time consuming task, lice are not harmful to your child.

Household prevention

I recommend the following to prevent re-infestations:

- Washing bedding, coats, hats, and towels in the hottest cycle and dry in a dryer.
- Put stuffed animals, clothing etc that can't be laundered into plastic bags for two weeks.
- Hair brushes and combs and hair accessories need to be soaked in very hot/ boiling, soapy water for 60 minutes
- Vacuum upholstered furniture, car seats, carpeting and mattresses.
- Keep hairbrushes/combs accessories separate for each household member.

Life cycle of lice

Lice cannot survive longer than 2 days off the human body. The eggs/nits are laid close to the scalp on the hair shaft. They are oval and tan in color prior to hatching and pearly/ grayish white after hatching. They need a temperature of at least 82F and a humid environment to incubate, usually hatching after 10 days. Consequently they will not usually survive off the body for very long in room temperature