Head Lice

Lice are small, gray-white bugs. They lay eggs that stick to hair. These are called "nits." You can see these tiny gray shells most easily on the back of the neck and above the ears. Lice need to be on the scalp to feed. If they fall off and can not feed, they can only survive for 1 to 2 days. To get rid of lice, you can either smother them with a greasy substance or kill them with medicine. If untreated, lice bites can make the scalp itch. If the scalp is scratched, the skin can get infected. Medicine prescribed by a doctor is needed to treat the infection.

You can get lice from sharing combs, hats, clothes and beds with someone who has them. If one family member has lice, all other members should check their hair for lice and nits.

Lice are usually easy to get rid of if you know what to do:

• Let your child’s school or day care know he has head lice.
• Follow the steps below for everyone in the family/home.

1. Take a warm, soapy bath; rinse and towel dry.
2. Cover eyes with a dry towel.
3. Shampoo hair and rinse well with warm water.
4. Place real mayonnaise (not Miracle Whip®), solid shortening (Crisco®), or petroleum jelly (Vaseline®) on the hair. Cover hair with a shower cap. Leave cap on for 8 to 10 hours, then wash the hair several times until clean. (Dish detergent may help in removing the oil. Dawn® degreaser is one of the best.)

OR

Run permethrin (NIX®) cream rinse or similar over-the-counter medicated rinse (found at any drug store) all over the hair and scalp. Carefully follow directions on the package to kill lice. Wet hair first according to the directions. Rinse well with warm water. Do not get Nix® rinse in the eyes. Do not use NIX® on children under two months of age. Check with your doctor before using NIX® if you are pregnant or breast feeding.

5. Rub hair dry with a dry towel.
6. Comb hair with a fine-tooth comb or "Nit comb" to get out all the lice nits. Nits are hard to get rid of. You may use a vinegar water solution (1/2 vinegar mixed with 1/2 water) to help loosen the nits. You may need to use your fingers to pull or scrape them off. You must remove ALL of the nits before your child's school will allow him to return.

7. Dress your child in clean clothes after his body and hair are clean.
8. Look at hair and scalp in 24 hours to make sure the lice and nits are gone. If not, wet hair with a mixture of one-part water and one-part vinegar. Comb the hair again with a fine-tooth comb until all the eggs are gone. Mayonnaise, shortening or petroleum jelly may be used again if necessary. If you see lice, you may use the NIX® rinse again in 7 to 10 days. Notify your doctor if you still see live bugs after 2 treatments.

9. Wash all sheets, pillow cases, towels, stuffed animals, washcloths and clothing in hot water. Put them in the dryer on high heat for 20 minutes to kill the nits. Professionally dry clean clothes you can’t wash. If unable to dry clean, place items in a sealed, air tight plastic bag for 2 weeks.

10. Wash all combs and brushes in hot, soapy water. Soak the combs in 130° water for 10 minutes.

11. Completely vacuum cloth-covered furniture and rugs to remove lice and nits.

Call your child’s doctor or the Children’s Mercy Hospital Information Line at (816) 234-3188 if:

- You still see lice or nits in your child’s hair after you have followed the doctor’s instructions.
- Your child has red, swollen, seeping spots on the skin around and under his hair, the back of his neck, etc.
- You find lice in other hairy areas of the body.