Lice Information

There are still many misconceptions regarding head lice and their transmission and treatment. This letter addresses some of those misconceptions, explains treatment and provides facts based on recent research.

**Here are a few facts that you may not be aware of:**

* Lice are not a sign of poor hygiene; they love clean hair because it is easier to latch on to.
* Lice do not hop, jump or fly; the only way they can get from one person to another is direct contact.
* Lice are not a source of infection or disease; they are simply a nuisance.
* You cannot get lice from your pet. The only place head lice can thrive is on the human head.
* When found, most cases of lice are already more than a month old.
* *Lice are not usually spread in school***.** Sleep-overs among friends and relatives are a common way they are passed from home to home.

**Treatment involves the following steps:**

* Shampoo the hair with a medicated shampoo, following the package instructions very carefully.
* Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens and other items that the infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment, using the hot water cycle and high heat drying cycle.
* Seal clothing and items that are not washable in a plastic bag and store for 2 weeks.
* Soak combs and brushes in very hot water for 5 – 10 minutes.
* Vacuum carpeted floors, furniture and car upholstery.
* Carefully inspect the hair, paying close attention to the back of the neck and around the ears, removing any nits (eggs) with a fine tooth comb or your fingernails.

**To help prevent re-infestation:**

* Check hair every few days for 2 weeks removing any nits.
* Repeat shampoo treatment according to package directions, usually in 7 -10 days.
* Avoid head to head (hair to hair) contact during play and other activities.
* Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons or barrettes.
* Tell others that need to know. One of the biggest challenges in eliminating head lice is parents’ discomfort in telling other parents about the problem when they find head lice, enabling the lice to be passed back and forth among close friends and relatives.

Our goal is that your child is treated and back in school right away. Please don’t hesitate to contact your child’s school nurse with any questions. We are supportive advocates who will assist you in dealing with head lice in a confidential manner.

References:

* NASN pediculosis position statement <https://www.nasn.org/Portals/0/positions/2016pslice.pdf>
* AAP policy on head lice <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/early/2015/04/21/peds.2015-0746.full.pdf>
* Center for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>
* Harvard School of Public Health <http://content.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,2006397,00.html?xid=rss-topstories>