

When Your Child Comes Home With Head Lice

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny, wingless, insects which live and breed in human hair. They move quickly when you part the hair and are hard to see.

The eggs are half the size of a pinhead, grey to brown in colour and are glued firmly to the hair. Newly laid eggs are **very close** to the scalp. The warmth at the scalp will hatch the eggs in about 7 to 10 days.

What should I do if I discover lice?

- Talk to a pharmacist. Ask for a product that kills head lice and their eggs. Make sure to ask about any special precautions to take while using the product. Some products may not be recommended for young children, people with certain allergies, or pregnant/nursing mothers. **Check with your doctor** regarding treatment for the following:
 - 1) Children under the age of two
 - 2) Persons with a seizure disorder
 - 3) Pregnant or breastfeeding mothers
 - 4) Lice are discovered on eyebrows, eyelashes or beard
 - 5) The skin of the scalp is broken or infected
- Only treat family members **who have** head lice.
- Follow the product directions **exactly**. Never use these products on a daily basis.
- Wear plastic or rubber gloves when using the product so you won't expose your hands to the chemical for too long. Wash your hands well, immediately after using the head lice product.
- Hold a towel tightly over the eyes to protect them from the product during treatment.
- Rinse hair under the tap instead of in the shower or tub to limit skin exposure and to prevent swallowing some of the product.



- **Store** any unused products out of the reach of children.

Important

- **Remove all live lice** from the hair using fingers, nit comb or brush. For long hair, brush hair from the scalp downward and then with head bent forward, brush hair from the nape of the neck upward to the scalp.
- **Sit by bright natural light** to see the eggs.
- Take hold of a lock of hair and **manually pull eggs** from the hair, because nit combs will not reach the new eggs that are laid close to the scalp.
- Using your thumbnail against your first finger, strip the eggs from the root of the hair down to the tips (place eggs in a paper towel for the garbage).
- Pin back that lock of hair and continue until **all the eggs are removed**.
- Make sure to remove the eggs that are **close to the scalp**.
- Ask the pharmacist when a second treatment should be done.
- Routine household cleaning is sufficient. Spraying of household items is not necessary and can be harmful.

Alternative or Natural Treatments

Currently there is a lot of information available on alternative treatments, some of which claim to be safer and more effective than traditional treatments for head lice.

All products, whether they are natural or not have risks associated with them. Some natural products can even be toxic if used full strength.

Other methods, like mayonnaise, oil, vinegar, wet-combing, etc., may not have risks associated with them but there is no scientific evidence that they work (*Canadian Pediatric Society, October 2008; Sick Kids Hospital June, 2008*).

What else should I do?

- **Tell** the school or child care centre.
- **Tell** anyone who has had close contact with the person in your family who has lice.
- **Ask** the school or child care centre about the procedure for re-entry.
- **Continue to check** your child's head once a week, after school breaks, sleepovers and vacations.

How do I prevent the spread of head lice?

- Check your child's hair carefully once a week for lice and eggs
- Teach your child to brush/comb hair every night
- Braid long hair or put into a ponytail (may be helpful)

Call the Head Lice Information Line
Halton Region
Dial 311 or 905-825-6000, ext. 5423
Toll free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)
TTY: 905-845-2769
www.halton.ca

to learn:

- How to tell that you have head lice
 - What to do if you have head lice
- How to prevent the spread of head lice
 - What to do if head lice come back