Your child may have been exposed to:

Head Lice

Anyone can get head lice. Head lice are very small brownish-colored insects that live on the head. They are less than 1/8" long, about this size [--]. They lay eggs (nits) close to the scalp. The eggs are tiny (size of the eye of a small needle) and gray or white in color.

If you think your child has Head Lice:

- Tell your childcare provider or call the school.
- Treat your child for head lice and check child's head and remove nits daily. **It takes at least 2 weeks to get rid of lice.**

  If all nits within ½" of the scalp are not removed, some may hatch and your child will be infested again.
- Check everyone in the house for head lice. Treat only household members with head lice, and treat them all at once.
- **Need to stay home?**

  Childcare and School:

  Yes, until first treatment is completed **and** no live lice are seen. Nits are NOT considered live lice.

Symptoms

Itching of the head and neck. Look for: 1) crawling lice in the hair, usually there aren't very many; 2) eggs (nits) glued to the hair, often found behind the ears and at the back of the neck; and 3) scratch marks on the head or back of the neck at the hairline.

If your child is infested with lice it will take 7 to 10 days from when the eggs are laid until they hatch.

Spread

- By head-to-head contact. Check your child for lice often.

  Lice do not jump or fly; they crawl and can fall off the head. Head lice do not live longer than 48 hours off the head. They only lay their eggs while on the head. The eggs do not hatch if they fall off the head. Lice do not spread to or from pets.

Contagious Period

Until treated with a lice killing product.

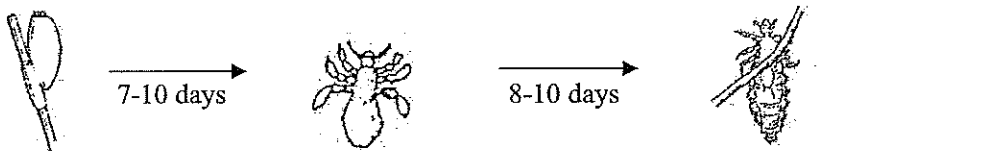
Call your Healthcare Provider

- Call your healthcare provider or pharmacy for advice. Recommended treatment includes using either a prescription or store-bought lice killing product.
- Follow the product directions carefully. With certain products a second treatment is recommended 7 to 10 days later. Lice treatment products are not 100% effective in killing lice, especially nits.
- **Removing the nits (nitpicking) is a very important part of the treatment for controlling head lice.** The nits are glued onto the hair shaft as they are laid, and require effort to remove. To remove the nits, use a metal nit comb, cat flea comb, or your fingernails to slide eggs off the hair shafts, or use scissors to cut the hair shafts that have nits glued to them. **Continue checking the head and combing hair daily for 2 weeks.** If all nits within ½" of the scalp are not removed, some may hatch and your child will get head lice again.

Prevention

- Never share hair grooming items and hair accessories (barrettes, combs, brushes, etc.). Clean all hair items by soaking in the lice treatment product for 10 minutes or cleaning with hot, soapy or boiling water for 5 minutes.
- Never share towels, bedding, clothing, hats, and headgear.
- Check your child's head every month. If one person in the home has head lice, others should be checked too. Sleepovers are a common place for head lice to spread. Check your child's head after a sleepover and wash all bedding brought home from the sleepover.
- Vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, mattresses, and seats in the car(s) thoroughly. **Insecticide sprays are NOT recommended** because this will expose household members to unnecessary pesticides.
- Wash clothing worn in the last 3 days (e.g., jackets, hats, scarves, pajamas) bedding, and towels in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes before using again. Clothing, stuffed toys, linens or backpacks that cannot be washed or dried can be dry cleaned or sealed in plastic for 2 weeks.

HEAD LICE LIFE CYCLE



NIT **NYMPH** **ADULT** Lays 4-5 nits/day

How to Remove Nits

Work in a well lit room or under a bright lamp (using a magnifying glass may help you see the nits)

- Divide the hair into 4 parts and divide each part into 1-inch sections.
- Stating at the scalp, use a metal nit comb, cat flea comb, or your fingernails to comb each hair section individually.
- Use the comb or your fingernail to slide eggs off the hair shaft or use scissors to cut hair shafts that have nits glued to them.
- Remove all nits each time you comb the hair.
- REMEMBER: **it can take at least 2 weeks to get rid of lice.**

For more information, call Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (MDHSS) at 573-751-6113 or 866-628-9891 (8-5 Monday thru Friday) or call your local health department.

More information about head lice can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/lice/head .