

## **HEAD'S UP: THE TRUTH ABOUT HEAD LICE**

**Head Lice:** They're the dreaded words no parent wants to hear. Every year, as many as 12 million children are affected by these small pests. The peak season for lice is August through October, and in January (after holiday vacations). Please remember that head lice can happen to anyone and is not a sign of poor health habits or uncleanliness. The good news is that lice are not harmful, but they are inconvenient and highly contagious. To treat lice, it helps to know more about them.

### **WHO gets lice?**

Anyone. Frequent, regular shampooing does not prevent lice. Younger children (ages 5-12) catch them more frequently because of close contact with one another. Animals do not carry or contract head lice.

### **HOW do you get them?**

They walk. They do not fly or hop. They travel from person to person directly (two heads touching) or are transferred via personal articles (combs, brushes, hats, pillowcases, headphones, hair ties, bows, or head bands, etc.) Please instruct your child to avoid sharing personal items. Check your children frequently and treat them immediately if you discover head lice. Treatment is not difficult, but it does take time and persistence.

### **FACTS about lice:**

The adult louse is a wingless insect less than 1/8" long and is pale brownish-gray. Lice do not carry disease. They bite the scalp causing itching. They move quickly and avoid light, so they are often difficult to see. The female louse lays 3-6 eggs (nits) a day and may live up to 30 days.

### **FACTS about nits:**

The nits (egg sacs) of lice are cemented to human hair with nature's own super glue. The nits appear as small, silvery, oval shaped specks that look like dandruff. But they are very difficult to remove from the hair. The nits hatch in 7-10 days.

### **TREATMENT of head lice:**

For successful treatment, you must first use an over the counter medicated shampoo designed to eliminate lice. Follow the directions on the package very carefully. Use a fine tooth comb to remove nits. It is very important to continue to look for nits and remove them daily for two weeks. You may also want to do a second washing with a medicated shampoo 7-10 days after the first washing to kill any newly hatched lice.

### **AVOIDING lice:**

Avoid borrowing or sharing other people's hair clips, combs, brushes, towels, pillows, hats and helmets. At the same time you treat your child's head lice, you'll want to clean your home and their personal items. Vacuum furniture, rugs, car seats, and throw pillows to remove lice or hair that may have fallen from your child's head. Wash personal items (hats, clothes, towels, bed linens, & backpacks) in hot water. After washing, dry them in the dryer's hot cycle for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean items that can't be washed or seal them in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.