

## Parent Head Lice Information

1. Do not panic!! If you suspect a case of head lice **PLEASE have it confirmed**. Your child's school nurse is your best source of information. Your pediatrician is also a good resource. However, he or she usually does not see it as often as your school nurse does. If you see something on your child's scalp or on their hair pull it out; put it on a piece of scotch tape and bring it to your school nurse. Do not use any shampoos until it is a confirmed case of head lice. Your school nurse will help you identify the "it?" If it is not a positive case of head lice be happy and continue to be watchful. If it is head lice let's get started.
2. The **louse (bug) or nit (egg)** is transferred from head to head. This can commonly occur from the use of **shared** hats, helmets, headsets, brushes, combs, or clothing items. Even head to head hugging with an infected person's head can result in shared lice or nits. The most common time for head lice to be transferred from head to head can be during a sleep over. While the infected person is asleep, the louse can walk from head to head until it finds a nice warm, clean and round hair follicle to lay eggs on. Even the Egyptian mummies in the pyramids have been buried with nits and nit combs. This is one of our most common human body bugs. It is not unusual to have head lice. It is a frustrating and an unpleasant persistent nuisance. The nit is glued on the side of the hair shaft usually at the base of the shaft. The nit will not easily slide along the strand of hair nor does it easily fall out. It is harder for the egg to be attached to dirty greasier hair, hair with gel products in it, to chemically dyed hair, or to coarse hair. Clean round hair follicles are a good environment for the egg/nit to be glued unto.
3. **Picking out ALL of the NITS is the most effective form of treatment**. The better at spotting and identifying the eggs/nits you are and pulling them out, the faster this problem will be resolved. This is where the word "nit picker" comes from. **Focus on the head** and work to identify and remove the nits on the head. Spend your time picking out and checking the head. The bugs want to stay and live on that head. They do not want to leave unless that head becomes too crowded or inhospitable. The egg will glisten in the light and it is usually at the base of the hair follicle. A person's scalp can also have dandruff, hair casts and soap residue on it. These are white and chalky and will easily fall out when the hair is moved. The nit is glued unto the side of the hair shaft and will not fall out. A good light source is very important to see them with. Try using a gooseneck lamp to shield your eyes while having it positioned like a spotlight on the subject's head. Sunlight is actually the best light. Place a white sheet down on the floor, a chair in the middle where you can stand or sit to pick out and search the head. You can remove the nit by combing with a "lice-comb" or grabbing it between your thumb and index fingernail and pulling it down the hair shaft. Use scotch tape to put the egg/nit on or even the occasional bug/louse if you can catch it, place it on the scotch tape and fold it over. With having the egg on the scotch tape you have not dropped it in your environment for it to hatch open and possibly re-infect again. Examine small sections of

the hair at a time, clip or rubber band the hair in sections so you know where you are. Go slowly. It is a good idea to have an activity for your child to do, a book, art project or a video. Sometimes checking your child's head while he or she is asleep can be very helpful. **Nit picking will take hours.** At the end of that head checking, place the sheet in the clothes washer and wash in hot water. Remember this is time consuming. This is the hard part. Try to have a playtime for you and your child to look forward to. Go outside to the park and run around. Just make sure if your child has long hair to braid or pin the hair close to the head so that child's hair is not shared with anyone else. Remember spending the time on picking out and inspecting the head is the most important thing about getting rid of the head lice. The more time you spend the more effective the eradication will be.

4. **Head lice shampoos are NOT 100% effective.** Most of the shampoos do not kill the eggs (nits). Remember these head lice shampoos are chemicals; they are a type of pesticide. Never use them if you are pregnant. Never use them on a child under 3 years of age. Only use the head lice shampoo if the person has a "confirmed" case of head lice. If you choose to use the shampoo, it will kill some of the bugs (lice) and most likely will slow down the bug laying its eggs (nits). However, the nits/eggs are usually not killed by the head lice shampoos. Nits have a very hard shell protecting it; most shampoo products do not permeate the shell and the nit is still alive after the shampooing. Many lice are resistant to the shampoos. Follow the manufactures directions on the box of the head lice shampoo. Use the product over the sink, not in the tub or shower, thus minimizing the risk of chemical exposure to ones body. Also cover the eyes with a towel. If a second shampooing is needed, **never use the same product twice.** Switching products can be more effective. Doing the shampoo will aid in the "slow down" of the lice. A second shampooing (different product) in 7 to 10 days may also be needed.
  
5. Your **child's living environment** needs to have a **long slow vacuuming** to pick up any hair follicles which could have nits on them and any lice that might be walking around. Vacuum thoroughly the child's bedroom, play area, sitting areas and car seating area. After the child's living areas have had a long slow vacuuming, take this vacuum bag out of the vacuum and remove it from the inside of your house. Throw it away. The clothing, bed linens and towels that your child has used needs to be washed and dried on the hot cycle. Hairbrushes, combs and barrettes can be washed on the hot cycle in your dishwasher. Extreme heat or extreme cold will kill the louse and/or the nit. If something cannot be washed, put the item in a plastic bag, tie it off and put it outside in your garage for a minimum of 14 days. During this "lice watching/picking time" it is a good idea to have your child play or be in a confined area of the house. This is helpful to keep the possible lice exposed areas contained and easier for you to clean. Placing a sheet over a couch or an easy chair can become the designated sitting spot for your child. The sheet can be easily washed. At the end of each day the child's clothing and bedding will need to be washed. This is time consuming but you need to contain the possible lice exposures. The main cleaning process is really one big slow vacuuming of your child's living environment.

6. **Several other forms of suggested lice treatments** are: (Always remember no treatment is 100%.)
- a. **Suffocating the lice.** Lice can live up to 2 hours submerged in olive oil. The Glencoe Schools' advise a Vaseline smothering after the lice shampooing. Soak/lather/cake every follicle of hair in Vaseline so that there are no air pockets anywhere on the scalp. Wrap the hair in plastic wrap squishing out any air pockets. Cover with a shower cap and tie a bandana over the cap. Leave on for 6 to 8 hours. (The plastic wrap and shower cap are **not recommended** for any unsupervised young child.) After the 6 to 8 hours, with a nit comb, combing small sections of hair at a time, comb out the "goopy" Vaseline. Remove any visible nits and or lice. The Vaseline will require repeated washings. "Dawn" liquid dish soap has been suggested. When the hair is dry re-exam for nits / lice and remove them. [www.aogc.org/house/house1.htm](http://www.aogc.org/house/house1.htm)  
Another similar suffocation program is the "5-step Battle Plan see [www.headliceinfo.com](http://www.headliceinfo.com)
  - b. **Warm dry heat** with a hair drier over small sections of the hair has been effective. Do this procedure long and slowly over a 30-minute period of time. This process was found to be 98% effective for the nit and anywhere from 10% to 80% for the lice. See "Lousebuster" article PEDIATRICS 11/2006, pages 1962-1970.
  - c. "Cetaphil", an over the counter **facial cleanser**, has been effective. Coat the dry hair in Cetaphil, and then blow-dry the hair. The Cetaphil dries and forms a shrink-wrap over the hair suffocating the lice. Leave on for 8 hours. Wash, pick and nit comb the hair. Dr. Pearlman found this to be 96% effective. PEDIATRIC ALERT 10/14/2004 or see [www.advancweb.com](http://www.advancweb.com)
7. **Returning to school**, when can my child go back to school? **The Winnetka School District #36** requires that your child be "**nit free**" on returning to his or her classroom. When you feel you have gotten all of the nits and or lice out of your child's head, go see your child's school nurse. Your school nurse will exam your child's head, and hopefully your child will return to his or her classroom. Once your child has been free of lice or nits for 24 hours this becomes day #1. You will need to continue to inspect your child's head for 14 more days. The school nurse will also do spot checks of your child's head over this 14-day watch period. This observation must be done to insure that the lice do not re-infest your environment. The life cycle of the nit once it is laid, it takes 7-10 days to hatch open and another 7-10 for the female to mature and begin laying her eggs. Head lice are crawling insects. These tiny parasites have specially adapted claws that allow them to crawl and cling firmly to the hair. They cannot hop, jump or fly. They need human blood to live, they dig in your scalp, their spit makes you itch, and it drinks your blood. One female head louse can lay up to 6 eggs per day. If your child has many nits and or lice, your child has had head lice for several weeks.

8. This process will take time. Stay positive, stay calm and spend your time nit picking. You will get through this. And you will laugh again.

For more information: National Pediculosis Association 781- 449-NITS  
[www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org)

Washburne	Skokie	Crow Island	Greeley	Hubbard Woods
847-446-6260	847-441-2194	847-446-1048	847-446-2638	847-446-1062

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#### Suggestions for prevention and or deterrents of Head Lice

1. Get to know you child's scalp know what his or her head looks like. Check their head frequently. Find out what an actual nit and louse look like.
2. No sharing of any head items like hair brushes, combs, hats, helmets, dress up clothing, sport pennies, barrettes, hair ribbons....
3. Note the cleanliness of any shared head rest areas: theater seats, air plane seats, amusement park rides, day care napping pads, frequently used sleeping areas, couches...
4. Use a warm hair drier (It is harder for nits to survive in warm dry heat.)
5. Use hair gel products (The gel is thought to clog the breathing holes of the lice.)
6. Tea tree oil (The tea tree oil is an astringent and has been suggested to deter the lice.)
7. Vinegar and water rinse after regular shampooing (It is thought that the vinegar may loosen the ni shell/glue hold on the hair follicle.)
8. Hair grooming with a lice comb.
9. Use a flat or curling iron (The heat is a deterrent.)

