



Head Lice

Anyone can get head lice. In fact, head lice infest over 10 million Americans a year. And while they are annoying and upsetting they are usually just a nuisance that must be managed.

If your child gets lice, DON'T PANIC! Head lice are not life threatening! They have nothing to do with cleanliness of the child or home. Head lice do not care if you are clean or dirty, rich or poor, boy or a girl. But they are very contagious.

Head lice are small (1/10 to 1/8 inch long), wingless, six-legged insects who need a human host for nourishment. They are different from body and pubic lice (crabs). Head lice live only on the scalp and hair of humans, usually on the back of the head and areas behind the ears. They are not known to transmit disease, but their bloodsucking causes intense itching which

may result in infections at the scratch bites. They can only crawl and cling to hair shafts, and cannot hop, jump, or fly. Lice live only on humans- not animals.

Head lice develop when the adult female head louse lays eggs (called nits) which she glues near the base of the hair shaft. The nits are very small and hatch in about a week. The young mature into reproducing adults in 7-10 days.

Head lice live about one month. During this time, a female can lay



90 eggs. Lice can only survive 2-3 days off the head, but usually they live only a few hours. Nits survive up to 10 days.

Lice is spread by a close personal contact with an infested person or by wearing that person's clothing or by sharing belongings such as combs, brushes, bedding, headgear, clothing, on the backs of chairs (including the car), or be transferred from one person's clothing or hair to another's.

To inspect for head lice, you will need: magnifying glass, flashlight, or natural sun light. Look for small grayish white eggs (nits) attached on the hair close to the scalp, usually around the nape of the neck and behind the ears. They are very hard to see and locate. It is very important to inspect the entire family when a lead lice infestation occurs.

Head Lice Removal

Step 1: Medication/Shampoo

Medications to kill head lice are available over-the-counter or by prescription from your doctor. Follow the directions carefully. Make sure that the shampoo covers the whole head, especially around the nape of the neck and behind the ears. Do not apply any medication more often than directed.

Step 2: Combing

Look for a choice in combs, plastic for fine hair and metal for thick/curly hair. This is the most important step, so COMB and ,COMB and, COMB. Comb out one section at a time. You may have to check more than once because live lice move around. Nits are also hard to find. Usually nits are attached to the side of a hair strand, close to the scalp, with a what feels like glue.



Step 3: Olive Oil (optional)

To help make sure that the lice and nits are gone, you can use olive oil every four days. Olive oil smothers and kills active head lice. Apply the olive oil to the hair and scalp at night and put a shower cap on over night then in the morning comb, and pick out any nits. Then wash and dry hair and check for nits again. You may do this treatment more often if you like, but be sure to do it every four days for three weeks for it to be effective.

Special thanks to Pam Quinn for her help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor		Niles		Three Oaks
769 Pipestone	M-139 Office	School Based	1205 N. Front St.	21 N. Elm
P.O. Box 706	2106 S. M-139	870 Colfax Ave	684-2800	756-2008
926-7121	927-5623	925-4500		

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



Back to School!

Although August marks the end of summer break for students, there is still much fun to be had! The Berrien County Health Department wants you to stay safe as you enjoy the end of summer, and get prepared for school. This month we will provide you with information on immunizations, hearing and vision screening, head lice, healthy eating and physical activity, and depression/mental health. For more information about any of these topics, **please call the health department at 926-7121.**

Tips to avoid spreading head lice:

- Combs and brushes should be discarded or soaked in hot water and a lice shampoo for one hour.
- Clothing and bedding that have come in contact with the child's hair need to be washed in hot water and put into the dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Carpets, couches and car upholstery should be thoroughly vacuumed.
- Toys and stuffed animals should be stored in a tightly sealed plastic bag for one week.
- Tell your child not to share combs, hair ornaments, or hats.



The Health Department can assist you with written information and education. We also have a video for you to borrow.

For more information or to borrow the video call 926-7121 and ask for the Public Health Nurse in charge for the day.

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