



# MIDDLEBORO PEDIATRICS

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## Tips for the Detection and Prevention of Head Lice

One of the most frustrating things about head lice is that it can spread easily and quickly through head-to-head or hand-to-head contact with an infested person. Any item that is used by a person with head lice, especially if it touches the head or shoulders, can become the source of a head lice infestation. To reduce the risk of spreading head lice within the household, or to prevent a reoccurrence in those who already have head lice, here's what you need to do:

### 1. Become a head lice detective

- The best way to detect an infestation is to routinely check your child's head for head lice and their eggs (called nits).
- The main symptom of head lice is intense scalp itching, but you can have head lice without itching.
- Check those at risk, especially children aged five to twelve. Girls may be affected more than boys because girls are more likely to share combs, hair accessories, and clothing.
- Head lice is prevalent year round. The most common months of head lice infestations are August to November.

### 2. Check for nits (lice eggs)

- Nits are tiny, tear-drop shaped eggs that are pearly white in color, so you may mistake them for dandruff. But unlike dandruff, they will not brush or blow out of the hair.
- Check for nits in bright light.
- Use a magnifying glass to help detect head lice and nits.
- Check the entire head, but pay close attention to the scalp. In particular, lift and separate hairs behind the ears and at the nape of the neck, as this is where head lice tend to gather.

### 3. Get smart about prevention - teach your child not to share personal items

- Combs, brushes, and headgear are some of the most common items that carry head lice from one person to another.
- Pillows, bed linens, hats, headphones, and bicycle and sports helmets can carry head lice.
- Encourage your child to share toys and books, but to keep some belongings personal and store them in a backpack if there are no private cubbies in the classroom.

### 4. If head lice are already in the household, make a clean sweep - clean your home thoroughly

- All personal head gear (hats, hair ribbons, helmets, etc.), scarves, coats, towels, and bed linens should be cleaned by machine washing in hot water then dried using the hot cycle of a dryer for at least twenty minutes.
- Personal articles such as clothing, bedspreads, blankets, pillows, or stuffed animals that cannot be washed should be put aside for a period of 24 hours because the lice need body heat in order to survive.
- Personal combs and brushes should be cleaned by soaking in hot water above 130°F for five to ten minutes.

## TIPS TO TREAT A CASE OF HEAD LICE

Getting rid of head lice is a time-consuming process, but it's not impossible! Fortunately, there are effective nonprescription treatments available. We recommend NIX.

### 1. Get tough - treat the head with a head lice-killing product

- NIX is available without a prescription at the pharmacy.
- Follow the directions carefully and completely.
- Never use the treatment product near the eyes.
- Home remedies, such as mayonnaise and petroleum jelly are not scientifically proven to work.
- Never use unapproved chemicals such as pet shampoos, gasoline, or kerosene.

### 2. Getting picky - You may need to remove nits

#### The Reasons

- Treatments kill head lice and the nits, but they do not remove the nits.
- Unlike dandruff or hair spray, nits cannot be removed by blowing or brushing the hair.
- Removal of nits is not necessary after treatment however many schools have a “no nits” policy for the child to be allowed to return to school. Follow the directions below only if your child’s school requires nits to be removed.

#### The Methods

After treatment, and while hair is still damp:

- Part the hair into four sections. Select a section to work on. Start at the top of the head in the section you have picked.
- With one hand, lift a 1-inch strand of hair. We recommend using a metal nit comb which can be purchased at any pharmacy. Get the teeth of the comb as close to the scalp as possible and always comb away from the head.
- If you pick nits out with your hands, you may want to wear rubber gloves, or wash hands carefully after nit removal on each child. Lice can live for a short time under your finger nails, and could be spread to you or to your other children.
- Using clips, pin back each strand of hair after you have combed out the nits. Clean the comb as you go. Wipe the nits from the comb with a tissue and dispose of the tissue in a sealed bag to prevent reinfestation.
- When finished combing, recheck the entire head for nits and repeat combing if necessary.
- Check daily for head lice or nits you may have missed.

### 3. Make a clean sweep

- Clean your home thoroughly, as indicated on the other side of this sheet.

### 4. Be on guard - check head again in seven days

- Use products in accordance with directions for use. If live lice are found after seven days, another treatment with the NIX is necessary. **If lice remain after a second treatment, please contact our office for additional treatment.**

**AFTER TREATMENT, THE CHILD IS NOT CONTAGIOUS, EVEN IF NITS REMAIN. HOWEVER, MANY SCHOOLS STILL MAINTAIN A “NO NITS” POLICY. YOU WILL NEED TO CHECK WITH YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL TO FIND OUT WHAT POLICY THEY HAVE FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL**