**Facts About Lice**

**Lice are not popular, and for good reason, but we also don’t know them as well as we may believe! Here is some reliable advice on how to help prevent lice from moving into your home, how to check for them, and if necessary, how to eliminate them. As it is important to know your enemy in order to defeat them, you will also find information on their way of life and on common misconceptions that circulate on the subject.**

Lice are tenacious parasites that have adapted particularly well to humans since the beginning of time. It is on the human body that lice find ideal conditions of protection, warmth and humidity. Lice feed on human blood.

In particular, lice love large gatherings of children (school, camps, etc.) and travelling. This is why the **return to school in September and January** are moments when we need be especially vigilant.

When lice are found on the human body, it is called pediculosis.

**Prevention**

A preventative treatment against pediculosis does not exist. It is entirely possible to limit and avoid the transmission of pediculosis by identifying and rapidly treating people who have lice.

**Here are some important reminders for kids**

* Avoid rubbing heads together with your friends
* Place toques, hats and scarves in your own jacket sleeves
* At the pool, at a friend’s house, at day camp or summer camp, and at school, do not share personal items such as combs, hair-brushes, barrettes or hats.
* **Always** put up long hair, in braids as often as possible, as lice attach to loose hair more easily.
* Lice have little hooked claws on the ends of their legs that allow them to move easily from one human to another; from hair to hair, as mentioned above, as well as through the fibres of clothing.

**Weekly Reconnaissance**

**By checking weekly,** carefully examining the wet hair of your child, in particular around the ears, near the neck and at the forehead, you will be able to spot lice more quickly and stop their stop them from spreading.

**Lice Alert: Daily Inspections**

Here is what to do if you discover your child has an itchy scalp or if the school advises you of an infestation:

* Under a good light, carefully examine the wet hair of your child **every day**, particularly checking around the ears, close to the neck and at the forehead.
* Help your child to wash their hair, rinsing well.

**Note:** Never use a treatment preventatively.

**What to do when you find lice!**

**1.** Put any sort of **edible oil** in your child’s hair before they go to bed (curiously mayonnaise is effective). Cover the head of your little angel with a shower cap or swimming cap and protect their pillowcase with a towel. Coconut oil is popular, and similar to other oils, it will suffocate lice.

**2.** The following morning, after wetting your child’s hair, comb it with a fine-toothed comb. “Lice combs” with long, circular teeth that are sold at the pharmacy are the most efficient. This process will dislodge the lice and give you an idea of the severity of the infestation.

**3.** Next, washing the hair well with liquid dish soap will eliminate the oil and the dead lice that were not dislodged by the comb; **it will not dislodge the nits** that may still be clinging to the hair**.** A female louse may lay an average of 5 eggs per day, so if you have found lice, it is very likely that there will also be nits in your child’s hair.

**4.** In theory, the dish soap should work to eliminate the oil from the hair; otherwise wash hair again with shampoo. **Do not use conditioner on hair during the period of lice infestation in order to optimize the treatment against pediculosis**.

**5.** At the pharmacy, purchase a product against pediculosis (an anti-lice product) such as **NYDA®**or **Resulzt®**: we have noted that these two products are recognized at schools as the most efficient anti-lice agents. The lice found at FACE School seem to have developed a resistance to other products on the market.

**6.** After the treatment, comb your child’s wet hair again using the fine-toothed lice comb, and continue to do this **everyday for at least 9 days**. In addition, while following the directions and dosage of the treatment you are using exactly, apply the treatment **again** and use the fine-toothed lice comb again **for at least 9 days.**

**7.** All nits must be removed from the hair in order to prevent the situation from becoming complicated and creating confusion for parents trying to differentiate between old and new nits.

**8.** Make certain that nits are completely dead by pinching them between your fingertips or with tweezers, or by cutting the hair with scissors. Nits are difficult to pull off as they cling to individual hairs. Remember nits are eggs and will become live lice if you do not eliminate them completely.

**9.** Wash sheets, pillowcases, towels, stuffed toys and any clothes that were worn in the past few days in hot water. Consider covering the seats of the car to avoid cross-contamination.

**10.** Vacuum everywhere in the house, particularly any furniture covered in fabric, such as sofas, easy-chairs, or benches, and all places where the child spends most of their time.

**11.** Place non-washable items such as pillows, cushions, certain stuffed toys, duvets and thick blankets in airtight plastic bags for **at least 12 days**. We often hear that lice will die when they do not have any food, but in the right conditions, the parasite may survive up to 9 days!

**12.** If one person in a household has lice, chances are high that everyone else has them as well. It is therefore very important that all family members act quickly to follow the advice mentioned above for checking, and if lice are found, to proceed to follow all of the steps for treatment. It is also extremely important to follow the instructions of the purchased treatment product *exactly*, especially the duration of application.

**13.** If your child was in direct contact with friends, or spent a night at a friend’s house, at their grandparents’ or another family member’s house, advise each person and ask them to carefully examine their hair and scalp. Otherwise, your child runs the risk of catching lice again by being in contact with them and you will need to start the entire process over again!

**Note:** Essential oils of lavender, mint, or green tea are sometimes recommended as treatments for lice; however, their efficiency has not been proven. **Only an anti-pediculosis treatment will get rid of lice.**

**Why hair?**

Lice find everything they need in human hair:

* blood for food;
* hair to cling onto, and on which their eggs will stay well-attached until they hatch;
* warmth (between 28-32°C), and humidity (rate of 70 to 80%) In order to reproduce;
* a good hiding place!

Lice may also hide in eyebrows, eyelashes and even in moustaches or beards. A bald person may also have lice!

**How do lice travel from one person to another?**

Lice are always searching for new territories to conquer. Group gatherings make their lives easier: thanks to their claws, they easily manage to move from one person’s hair to another’s as soon as two heads are in contact.

**The Truth About Lice**

* Lice move easily from one head to another, but they do it by walking very quickly, not by jumping.
* Lice do not differentiate between social classes.
* Lice love clean hair and dirty hair alike.
* Lice may not always cause itchiness.
* Nits stay less than 1 cm (0.6 cm exactly) from the scalp as they require more heat than adult lice. They stick to hair, which helps to distinguish them from dandruff, which detaches easily from hair.
* Domestic animals may get fleas, but not lice.

Information online: Lice... Lice... Lice... All there is to know about head lice - Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux, 2018.

If you would like more information about lice, additional reference materials are available at local libraries.