

Head Lice

FACTS:

- Head lice (pediculosis) are parasitic insects found on the heads of people. They do not pose a significant health hazard and are not known to spread disease.
- There are three forms of lice: the *nit*, the *nymph*, and the *adult*. Nits are head lice eggs. The nit hatches into a baby louse called a nymph. Nymphs mature into adults about seven days after hatching. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has six legs, and is tan to greyish-white.
- The largest impact of head lice comes not from the condition itself but from our culturally-based reactions and emotions towards the condition.
- Individuals are at risk if they come in close contact (especially head-to-head contact) with someone who already has head lice. Occasionally, head lice may be acquired from contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) or other personal items (such as brushes or towels) that belong to an infested person.

RESOURCES:

State of Michigan Head Lice Manual

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Michigan_Head_Lice_Manual_103750_7.pdf

CDC – Parasitic Disease Information Head Lice Infestation Factsheet

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/>

CDC – Parasitic Disease Information Treating Head Lice Infestation Factsheet

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/factsheet_headlice_treating.htm

The National Pediculosis Association

<http://www.headlice.org/>

MedlinePlus – Head Lice

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/headlice.html>



WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Symptoms of Head lice include the following:

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites.
- Irritability.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected.

Head Lice is most commonly found:

- On the scalp
- Behind the ears
- Near the hairline (??) at the back of the neck.

Head lice hold on to hair with hook-like claws found at the end of each of their six legs. Head lice are rarely found on the body, eyelashes, or eyebrows.

Diagnosing head lice requires the following: (Information obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention):

- An infestation is diagnosed by looking closely through the hair and scalp for nits, nymphs, or adults.
- Finding a nymph or adult may be difficult; there are usually few of them and they can move quickly from searching fingers.
- If crawling lice are not seen, finding nits within a 1/4 inch of the scalp confirms that a person is infested and should be treated.
- If you only find nits more than 1/4 inch from the scalp (and don't see a nymph or adult louse), the infestation is probably an old one and does not need to be treated.
- If you are not sure if a person has head lice, the diagnosis should be made by your health care provider, school nurse, or a professional from the local health department or agricultural extension service.

SERVICES AVAILABLE:

Your local health department is responsible for providing technical support and knowledge to schools. This may include educational sessions that update teachers and school administration about screening techniques, identification of head lice and treatment options.

Your local health department is also responsible for disseminating the most current information on head lice recommendations and control measures.

Call the Tuscola County Health Department for more information.