



Health

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE
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Dear Director, Staff and Parents:

This is to address some of your concerns regarding children who have lice. The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's policy for day care attendees who have lice is they are to be excluded for 24 hours after being treated with the medicated shampoo that is recommended for lice removal and **the nits (eggs) must also be removed from the hair.** The removal of the nits is a tedious process, since it has a "gluey hold" to the hair shaft. This process is the responsibility of the parent.

When a medical provider sends a student back with a "clearance", the child can still be sent home if the "nit-free" policy of the Bureau of Child Care at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is not in compliance. Physicians sometimes advise parents, that the shampoo process is sufficient. A note from a physician is not a requirement for a child who has lice to return to child care. Physicians may not want a child with lice in their office or clinic and do not routinely check heads for a "clearance." The Child Care Center should check the child's head and he/she must be "nit-free" before being readmitted.

Guidelines from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene insist on no nits for attendees of a Child Care Center, because there is no guarantee that the nit (egg) has been destroyed. Consequently, nits have to be removed by hand with a special comb. The Department of Education's policy for school-age children, which states a child only needs to be "lice free," is different from the Health Department's readmission policy to child care.

I hope this clarifies our policy regarding lice and nits. Please visit www.nyc.gov/health for additional information on treating head lice. If you have any further questions, please call.

Sincerely,

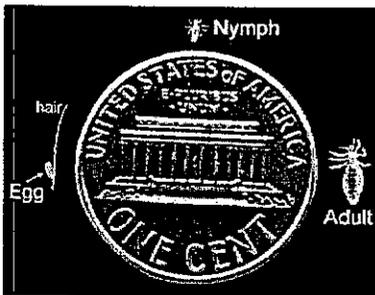
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Head Lice Facts



What are head lice?

Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitus*) are tiny insects that feed on human blood. Lice are found in human hair and on the scalp. Lice are most commonly found on the scalp behind the ears or near the neckline around the base of the scalp. Head lice tend to be very small (around the size of a sesame seed, and range in color from pale tan to dark brown). They tend to cause itching on the head, behind the ears or around the nape of the neck.



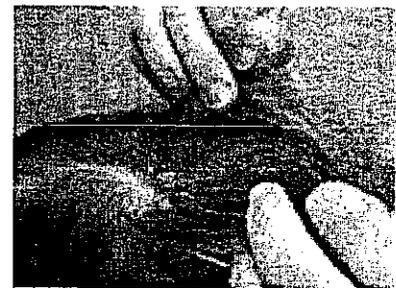
The lice use claws on their legs to hold onto hair. Adult female head lice lay eggs called nits at the base of the hair shafts. Once the eggs hatch the nymphs or baby head lice develop over three weeks to become adult head lice, where they can lay their own eggs and start the cycle again.

School aged children are at particularly high risk of being exposed to head lice. The most common way for head lice to move from one person to another is through direct head-to-head. Head lice also are spread through via shared combs, hats, hairbrushes, scarves, hair accessories and bedding (sheets, cots, pillows). Girls tend to get lice more than boys. To avoid lice, encourage your children not to share head gear or objects that are worn or come in contact with the head with other children.

How do I treat head lice if my child has it?

If you believe your child has lice, you should do the following:

- Visit your doctor. He/she will likely prescribe a medicated shampoo or recommend an over-the counter lice product and tell you the treatment process.
- After using the shampoo be sure to comb wet hair with a lice comb to remove nymphs and adult lice.
- Do not use shampoos that contain Lindane.
- Wash all bedding, towels and clothing that were exposed to lice with soap and hot water and dry for at least 20 min. to kill all remaining lice.
- Immediately dry-clean all dry-clean clothing that was exposed to lice.
- Put any stuffed toys in a plastic bag and seal tightly for 10 days to kill all lice through starvation.
- Throw away or disinfect all combs or hairbrushes with alcohol or medicated shampoo to kill lice.
- Throw away all hair accessories (hair elastics and ribbons).
- Vacuum carpets and upholstered furniture.



Should my child attend school or daycare if he/she has head lice?

If a child has head lice he/she should not attend school or daycare until lice treatment is completed. After treatment children should be checked to make sure that no live lice or nits (eggs) remain on the scalp. Once the child has received treatment and no more live lice or nits are seen, he/she may return to daycare.

To learn more about head and other lice visit nyc.gov/health and search for lice.