

TODAY'S FUTURE

Couples and families have it in their power to be happy with each other and create a pleasant and peaceful home environment in which they live together.

Head Lice – Know How, Know Now

Oh no...I saw something shimmer in the light as we walked out of the building. No, it cannot be! But yes, it was – the dreaded lice egg, AKA a nit.

As soon as I saw a nit on one child, I checked the other...BAM – she has them too. I had a mini panic attack (my husband would say it was more than “mini”) before I pulled myself together and told myself I can handle this. Two girls with long, thick tresses. Oh boy.

Off to Target (but pretty much any superstore or pharmacy will carry a brand or two) to purchase the correct amount of lice killing Shampoo. The amount of lice killing shampoo you will need varies on hair length and the number of heads you are treating. Meanwhile, in my head I have this crazy person ranting over and over. “How did you miss this last week when the oldest said her head was itchy?!” “You give the little one a bath and scrub her – head to toe every day or two, how did you not see those?!” “Who have the girls been around that gave them this...or worse, who have they shared this with?!”



Adult louse

photo by Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County

Stop, take a deep breath.



Checking hair for nits and lice

photo by Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County.

It is important for you to know that live lice are only 1/10-1/8 inches long and are tan to grey in color. This makes them hard to see unless you are looking very carefully for them. Lice eggs (nits) are white in color, but turn coffee colored when they are about to hatch. Nits are found 1/4-1/2 inch from the scalp. You know you have found a nit if the object doesn't flake off the hair or brush off when you touch it. A female louse will glue her eggs tightly to an individual hair, usually behind the ears and at the nape of the scalp, but they could be anywhere. If you find something questionable try and pull it off the single hair.

If the object slides up and down the hair, but won't come off it is probably a nit. I recommend just pulling out or clipping off the hair strand with the egg on it and flushing it down the toilet, that way you know that one will not be back! In addition, I strongly recommend purchasing a comb designed specifically to remove live lice – this is not the same as the comb that comes in the box with the lice killing shampoo. Combing is the key to taking care of a lice problem and it can be done every day along with the nit picking. Since lice may be resistant to the over the counter shampoo you must be diligent about combing out any remaining live lice. You can find step by step videos and a Family Guide for combing correctly at

<http://lancaster.unl.edu/pest/lice>.



Nit (viable – alive)

photo by James Kalisch UNL Entomology.

Depending on how long lice have been making a home on the head will determine how many live lice and nits you will see. Lice lay around 6 eggs per day. Eggs hatch in about 7-10 days and it takes another 9-10 days before the immature female louse can lay her own eggs. This is why it is important to follow the directions on the lice killing shampoo. Shampoo's will have you apply them when you first notice nits or live lice and then apply for a second time in 7-10 days. I would argue that it is important to comb and "nit pick" daily from the day you applied the lice killing shampoo through the second

application 7-10 days later. After that, it is recommended that you look carefully through the infected person's hair at least once a week to check for re-infestation. If you are finding more live lice or nits you probably missed a nit.

Human head lice love humans, so you do not need to worry about spreading your head lice to pets. Also, head lice love a nice warm head. Most likely, if they fall off onto a pillow or the carpet they will not survive, so focus on the infected persons head. It is important to check family members and anyone who may have shared combs, brushes and hair ties with the infected person.

The information shared in this blog is researched-based. Lice are nuisance pests and are not a health risk. Nebraska Extension does not recommend any insecticide sprays, foggers or bombs to control lice. Some of these methods, along with overuse of the shampoo can be dangerous! Please remember to read the label on the shampoo and combs you purchase and follow the directions EXACTLY.

If you cannot seem to get rid of lice and nits I would recommend you contact your physician for next steps.

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5 Tips to a Healthier Halloween

- Hand out healthier treats rather than just candy (granola bars; snack packs such as trail mix, raisins, crackers, or pretzels; 100% juice boxes; non-candy Halloween treats such as stickers, bookmarks, tattoos, erasers, and pencils).
- Eat a nutritious meal before going trick-or-treating, so children



- are not hungry and only want to eat candy for supper.
- Limit the number of treats your child can have each day. (Make sure to decide the appropriate number ahead of time and let children know the limits and why it is important to limit candy)
 - Keep candy out of reach to prevent continuous and mindless eating of candy.
 - Eat a piece of candy with a glass of milk or apple slices to add some healthy nutrients.