

2014-2015

# LICE... LICE... LICE...

ALL THERE IS TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE



Lice have been around for a long time and they are not about to disappear any time soon. They are not dangerous, although they can be annoying.

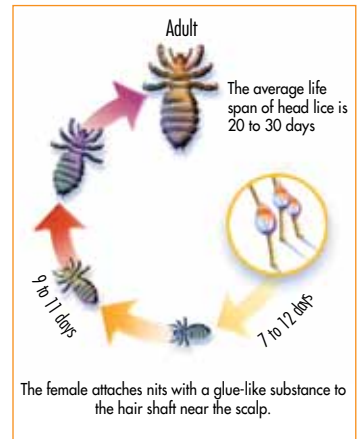


# Did You Know

- **Head lice are often found in children who go to school or to a child care centre, especially after summer vacation.**
- **They affect anybody, rich or poor.**
- **They don't care if your hair is dirty or clean, they still like it.**
- **They don't always cause itching.**
- **They aren't treated by washing your hair with regular shampoo: special louse treatment is necessary.**
- **They don't carry disease.**

## ••• Head lice

- They are minute greyish insects.
- They feed on human blood.
- They live near the hair root and can sometimes be found on eyebrows and in beards.
- They don't live on pets.
- They don't jump or fly.
- Females lay an average of 5 eggs (nits) per day.



## ••• Nits

- They cling to the hair shaft.
- They are difficult to remove.

### LIVE NITS

- They are greyish-white eggs that look like puffy, shiny, and translucent dandruff flakes.
- They are usually found within 6 mm of the scalp.

### DEAD NITS

- They are whiter and dried out.
- They are mainly found more than 6 mm away from the scalp.

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6 mm

A drake **dandruff**, **dust**, or **dirt** that can be easily removed **is not a nit**.

## ••• How do you get head lice?

- Lice can spread easily through **head-to-head contact**, like a hug, for example.
- Head lice **are not easily spread through contact with personal belongings** such as hats, combs, hairbrushes, and pillowcases, or through contact with the back of sofas, or with sheets, carpets, eyeglasses, etc.



## ••• How do you find out if you have lice or nits?

By **CHECKING THE HEAD, PREFERABLY with a NIT COMB, a very fine-toothed comb designed for this purpose. Most often, there are less than 10 or 20 lice on an infested head, so it is important to perform a thorough examination.**

### WHEN?

- At least once a week, after shampooing, especially right after summer vacation.
- Every day, if there is a head lice infestation around.
- Whenever the scalp starts to get itchy.

### HOW?

- Place the child's head under a good light: head lice flee from light and you can see them moving (a magnifying glass can help).
- Wet the hair, then comb it with the nit comb. Conditioner makes louse hunting easier. Conditioner is not recommended when you're using Kwellada-P® 1% or Nix® 1% because it reduces the effectiveness of the treatment (see the "How to Treat Lice" section).
- Look for lice and nits, especially behind the ears and near the back of the neck.
- Separate the hair into tufts the width of the comb. In the case of very long hair, the tufts should be about 2 cm in width.
- Comb the hair from scalp to tip with a nit comb (fine tooth comb).
  - Examine the hair section by section, from one side to the other and from the forehead back to the nape of the neck.
  - Look for lice or nits on the comb each time you run it through the hair.



**Wash your hands after each examination.**

## ●●● If you find lice or nits

- **Apply** head lice medication as soon as possible.
- **Inform** the school or child care centre and anyone who has been in close contact with the infested child, as soon as possible. As a rule, children should not have to stay home from school or daycare.
- **Check** the heads of **all other family** members.



**Treat ONLY those who have lice or live nits.** The treatment is more effective when all family members who are infested are treated **at the same time** (on the same day).

## ●●● How to prevent head lice

### **Remind children to:**

- Avoid head-to-head contact.
- Keep hats, caps, and scarves in their coat sleeves.
- Not to share personal items, such as combs, hairbrushes, barrettes, and hats.
- Keep long hair tied back.

### **Check the child's head regularly.**

There is no preventive treatment. Only early screening and treatment of those infested can prevent head lice from spreading.

**Parents' cooperation is essential if head lice are to be prevented and controlled.**

# Treating head lice



**A person with lice or nits (eggs) should be treated with head-lice medication.**

**Products for animals should not be used on humans.**

## ••• Choosing the product

The Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux recommends the following **two types** of products:

- **Treatments in 2 applications (kill lice and nits):**

- Kwellada-P® 1% or Nix® 1%, or NYDA®.

These products are recommended for children age 2 and over.

- Pronto® or R & C®.

These products may be used for children age 2 and under.

- **Treatments in 3 applications (kill lice but have a little effect on nits):**

- Zap® or Resultz®.

These products are recommended for children age 2 and over.



Kwellada-P®, Nix®, Pronto® and R & C® can be used by pregnant and nursing mothers. Kwellada-P® or Nix® are the first choice of treatment. Ideally, before using head-lice medication, it is suggested that pregnant or breastfeeding woman consults her doctor.

All these products are available over-the-counter in drugstores. While there are other head-lice products available on the market, their effectiveness has not been demonstrated in published studies.

**Application of these products may cause itching or a mild burning sensation of the scalp.**

If eyebrows are infested, apply petroleum jelly (Vaseline® or Lacri-Lube®) at least 2 to 4 times a day for 1 week. The dead nits can then be removed with the fingernails or tweezers, by sliding them along the eyebrow.

## ••• Application principles

Administer the recommended number of applications, even if you find no live lice or viable nits can be in the hair. For the best chance of success, use a nit comb to remove lice and nits during treatment.

If you find **live lice** 17 days **after the first application of the product**, it is recommended that you repeat the treatment, we recommend repeating treatment using a product from a different box or column in the table below.

**If you have any doubts about the effectiveness of a treatment, consult a healthcare professional (pharmacist, nurse, or doctor).**

### TREATMENTS IN 2 APPLICATIONS (kill lice and nits)

- Kwellada-P® 1%
- Nix® 1%
- Pronto®
- R & C®
- NYDA®

### TREATMENTS IN 3 APPLICATIONS (kill lice but have little effect on nits)

- Zap®
- Resultz®

How to apply: Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the product selected.

When you have finished the treatment according to the manufacturer's instructions, you can dry hair with a fresh towel or a hair dryer. Put used towels in with dirty laundry.

Use a nit comb to remove lice and nits 2, 11, and 17 days after the first application. Using a nit comb increases your chances of successful treatment.

Repeat the treatment 9 days after the first application.

Apply again after 7 days, and again 7 days after that.

## ••• Removing nits

- Apply **a damp towel to the scalp** for at least 30 minutes to help dislodge the nits.
- Place the head under a good light; a magnifying glass can help.
- Get a nit comb and work near a source of hot water.
- Untangle hair with an ordinary comb.
- Separate the hair into tufts the width of the comb. In the case of very long hair, the tufts should be about 2 cm in width.
- Comb through each tuft of hair with a nit comb.

- Angle the nit comb towards the scalp and insert it into the tuft as close to the scalp as possible.
- Make sure that the entire length of the teeth is in the tuft.
- Comb out along the complete length of the hair.
- Examine the hair section by section, from one side to the other and from the forehead back to the nape of the neck.
- Pay particular attention to behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
- Soak the nit comb in hot water after running it through each tuft of hair.

To remove a nit that the nit comb doesn't get, use fingernails or eyebrow tweezers to slide it along the length of the hair.

Both the ordinary and nit combs must be cleaned using one of the methods described below.

## • • • Washing personal belongings

**The risk of infestation through contact with personal belongings is minimal, but if you receive a notice from the school or child care centre, treat personal belongings (bedclothes, combs, hairbrushes, hats, caps, and other accessories) used on a regular basis by the infested person using one of the following methods:**

- Soak belongings in undiluted head-lice medication for 5 to 10 minutes.
- or
- Soak belongings in hot water (around 65°C or 150°F) for 5 to 10 minutes.
- or
- Put clothing in the dryer set at the warmest setting for 20 minutes.
- or
- Dry-clean clothing.
- or
- Store belongings in a sealed plastic bag for 10 days.



**Spraying the house, furniture, or other household objects with pesticides is NOT recommended. Not only is this ineffective in controlling head lice, but it can also pose a serious health risk to people or animals exposed to a potentially toxic product. Carpets and sofas can be vacuumed.**

This document may be found in the *Documentation* section of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux Web site at: [www.msss.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca)

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