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Head Lice Education



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Pediculosis (Head Lice)

- Parasitic insects with six legs that feed on human blood.
- Head lice are found on about 6-12 million people worldwide.
- Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene.
- People, especially children ages 3-10, are at risk. Lice do not live on pets.



Facts about Head Lice

- Signs that someone has head lice:
 1. Visible lice and nits seen in hair.
 2. Itching - caused by allergic reaction to the saliva of the louse when it bites.
 3. Irritability.
 4. Sores on head from scratching.
- Lice spread by:
 1. Contact with infected person.
 2. Wearing infected clothing.
 3. Using infected combs, brushes, or towels.
 4. By lying on bed, pillow, carpet or stuffed animal that has recent contact with infected person.

Life cycle of Head Lice

- Nits (the eggs of the head louse) are small yellowish-white, oval-shaped eggs that are found “glued” to the hair shaft near the scalp.
- Nits must be laid by live lice. You cannot “catch nits.”
- Once laid, it takes 7-10 days for a nit to hatch, and another 7-10 days for the female to mature and begin laying her own eggs.
- Head lice are clear in color when hatched and then quickly develop a reddish-brown color after feeding.
- Head lice are about the size of sesame seeds.
- Head lice are crawling insects. They cannot hop, jump, or fly.
- Head lice do not thrive on pets. Pets do not spread head lice.
- Head lice are small, wingless insects which feed on human blood. They need human blood in order to survive.
- Head lice live for approximately 30 days on a host and a female louse may lay up to 100 nits (eggs) in her lifetime.
- Head lice off of their human hosts will starve and die within two days.