

Module 10 - Managing Head Lice in Child Care Settings



Integrated Pest Management for
Child Care Settings

What are head lice?



- Insects with six legs and no wings.
- They live exclusively in human hair (head, eyebrows and even eyelashes)
- They feed on blood.
- They chew rather than suck blood (not like a mosquito).
- Eggs (nits) are cemented to hair shaft.

Identify head lice



Photo by CDC

Images to assist in the identification of head lice and their eggs.
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>



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Head lice

- Females lay eggs (nits) that are glued to the hair shaft.
- Lice can live as long as 30 days on a person.
- Eggs can last up to two weeks.
- They die quickly (24-36 hours) after falling off a person.
- Having head lice is also known as pediculosis.



How do you get head lice?

- Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene or lack of cleanliness. Anyone can get them.
- They are easily transferred among children and people in close contact.
- Sharing brushes, hats, clothes, or bedding can transfer head lice.



What is the harm?

- Head lice are easily spread.
- They cause itching, sometimes severe.
- Bites may create skin lesions that ooze or crust.
- Panicked reactions may lead to dangerous treatments.
- Head lice do not transmit diseases!

If a child in day care has head lice

- Do not spray pesticides! Regular cleaning is enough.
- Isolate the child's coat, hat and other belongings.
- Call the parent or guardian and explain.
- Warn the parents of the other children that head lice have been found, but do not identify the child.

Inspect all children's heads for lice

- Use a bright light and magnification.
- Look around the base of the skull and the ears, $\frac{1}{4}$ inch up the hair shaft for nits.
- Look for live lice, nits and marks on the skin.



Heat kills head lice

- Head lice are killed by dry heat.
- Use a hot dryer to decontaminate bedding, belongings, stuffed animals and other soft items.
- Place dry items into a dryer set on hot for 20 minutes.
- Washing is not necessary, but is OK.

Head lice treatment

- Combing with a fine toothed metal comb is good for removing live lice and nits.



Head lice shampoos

- Over-the-counter and prescription shampoos are used to kill head lice.
- These have pesticides in them.
- Head lice are commonly resistant to ingredients in these shampoos.
- Do not attempt to treat a child in your care.
- Parents must speak with their child's doctor to decide which treatment is right.

Centers for Disease Control

- For instructions about the use of lice shampoos and other treatments see:
<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>

Don't use over-the-counter sprays and foggers

- Over-the-counter sprays and foggers are ineffective for controlling head lice
- They do not belong in child care centers.
- They are dangerous to children's health.



Pest management

- Head lice die quickly (24-36 hours) after falling off a person.
- Pesticides are not necessary for controlling lice that may have fallen off a person.
- Head lice are technically not an issue of pest management, since lice shampoos are considered medicine.

Take away messages

- Lice are not a medical emergency but must be taken seriously.
- Isolate belongings to prevent spread.
- Check children's heads and contact parents.
- Do not use pesticides or lice shampoos in a child care setting.
- Isolation and regular cleaning are enough to protect children and staff from head lice.

Excellent Resource

- www.headlice.org The National Pediculosis Association website with information about identifying lice, managing lice, what parents, teachers and doctors need to know.