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## PEDICULOSIS TREATMENT INSTRUCTION SHEET

### Description

Head lice are spread primarily by direct head-to-head contact with an infested person; however, it is still recommended that parents discourage their children from sharing brushes, combs and hats.

The eggs (nits) of lice hatch in 7-10 days. Head lice can be passed to others as long as there are any live lice.

Head lice may be brown or grayish, with flat wingless bodies. They are small insects about 2-3 mm in length and about half as wide. They move quickly and shy away from the light, making them difficult to see. Lice have six legs and live almost entirely on the head. They bite the scalp to obtain blood which is their only means for survival. It is the biting which causes an infested person to feel itchy. Head lice can only survive for up to 56 hours if off the head.

The eggs (nits) are tiny and may be yellowish-white, brown or gray and shiny. They are glued to the hair near the scalp. Unlike lint or dandruff, they will not wash off or blow away. Eggs may be found throughout the hair but are most often located at the nape of the neck, behind the ears and at the crown. A magnifying glass and natural light may help when looking for them.

### Treatment

All infested family members should be treated at the same time. There are special creme rinses and shampoos which contain chemicals which kill the lice. Regardless of the product used, the eggs (nits) must be removed manually. Using a lice shampoo is not enough to get rid of the lice.

If you are pregnant, nursing, have allergies or are using medications, consult your pharmacist or call the Mother-Risk Program at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto at 416-813-6780.

If you are treating others, wear plastic or rubber gloves.

### Product Use

Read the package directions of the product you have chosen and follow them carefully. If you have questions about the product, ask your pharmacist or consult with your doctor.

To help loosen the eggs after the treatment, a suggestion is to rinse hair with warm water and vinegar (½ water, ½ vinegar). Keep hair wrapped in a wet towel and leave vinegar on hair for one hour.

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## Removal of Eggs (Nits)

Since lice combs do not remove all eggs, using your fingernails to pull out the eggs is the best way to be sure that your child is completely clear.

1. You will need good lighting, i.e. sunlight, a strong lamp, etc. Use a magnifying glass if eyesight is a problem.
2. Use a comb or hairbrush to remove tangles.
3. Divide hair into small sections and fasten off the hair that is not being worked on. Using a fine toothed comb or lice comb, go through each section from the scalp to the end of the hair. Dip the comb in a cup of vinegar or use a paper towel to remove any lice, eggs (nits) or debris from the comb between passings. (If debris builds up, use an old toothbrush to clean the comb.)
4. Work through that same section of hair and look for attached eggs. They are always oval-shaped, usually shiny gray, white or brown. Eggs are laid close to the scalp but can also be found anywhere along the hair shaft. Use your fingernails or scissors to cut the individual hair strands with attached eggs.
5. Go on to the next section until all sections have been completed. All eggs should be removed.
6. When all the eggs have been removed, the comb should be cleaned and soaked in HOT water for ten minutes. Wash hands and clean fingernails.
7. After the egg removal has been completed, search your child's hair for live lice. They move quickly and may be caught by a tweezer, your fingernails, or by using double-sided tape.
8. Check the infested person every day for at least two weeks and regularly afterwards. Finding an egg or two the next day does not necessarily mean re-infestation. Being consistent and diligent about manual removal will help.
9. If additional eggs (3-5) per day are found, live lice may still be on the head. Another thorough manual search is recommended at that time.
10. A few freshly laid eggs (nits) may not be killed by treatment shampoos or creme rinses. That is why ***a second treatment is now recommended 7-10 days after the first treatment.***

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### **Other Measures to Control this Problem to be Carried Out at the Time of Treatment**

1. There is little evidence to suggest that sharing hats, combs, brushes, and other personal articles can spread head lice; however, heat will kill lice and families may wish to wash personal articles in hot water for at least ten minutes. Drying items at high temperatures, or storing them in plastic for 10-14 days, will also kill lice.
2. It is not necessary to use chemical sprays in your home as part of your treatment.
3. Check each member of the family daily. Once the condition is cleared, check each family member two times a week for a month, or more if there is an outbreak.
4. For more information contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org), or call 1-877-721-7520.

We request that all parents co-operate in following the above recommendations. It is only with your help that this condition will be controlled.