

# LICE PROTOCOL (revised 10/2017)

## Definition

A scalp infection with tiny gray bugs called lice

## Symptoms

- Itching of the scalp is the main symptom.
- A scalp rash may be present. The back of the neck is the favorite area.

## Lice and nits

- Lice are 1/16-inch (2 mm) long, gray-colored, move quickly, and are difficult to see.
- Nits are white eggs firmly attached to hair shafts near the skin. Unlike dandruff or sand, nits can't be shaken off the hair shafts.
- The nits are easier to see than the lice because they are white and very numerous.

## Lifespan of lice

- The nits (eggs) hatch into lice in about 1 week.
- Nits (eggs) that are over ½ inch (1 cm) from the scalp are empty egg cases and very white in color.
- Off the scalp, nits can't survive over 2 weeks.
- Adult lice survive 3 weeks on the scalp or 24 hours off the scalp.

## Cause

- A tiny insect the size of a sesame seed

## Transmission of head lice: live lice, not nits

- Only live lice can transmit lice to another child.
- Nits (lice eggs) cannot transmit lice because they are attached to the child's hair.
- Almost all transmission is from direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. Lice cannot jump or fly to another person's hair.
- Indirect transmission of lice from hats, caps, hair brushes, combs, headphones and other objects is very uncommon.
- Most transmission of lice occurs at home, not school or other public places. Sleepovers and bed-sharing are a major source.

## Return to school

- Your child can return to child care or school after 1 anti-lice treatment.
- A child with head lice doesn't need to miss any school or child care because of the presence of nits, because nits are not contagious.

## Home Care Advice/Treatment for Head Lice

### Reassurance

- Head lice can be treated at home.
- With careful treatment, all lice and nits (lice eggs) are usually killed.
- There are no lasting problems from having head lice.
- They do not carry any diseases.
- They do not make your child feel sick.

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### Cleaning the house

- Lice that are off the body rarely cause reinfection. (Reason: lice can't live for over 24 hours off the human body.) Just vacuum your child's room.
- Soak hair brushes for 1 hour in a solution containing some anti-lice shampoo.
- Wash your child's sheets, blankets, pillow cases, and any clothes worn in the past 2 days in hot water (130° F or 54° C) kills lice and nits.
- Optional step (probably not necessary): Items that can't be washed (e.g., hats, coats, or scarves) should be set aside in sealed plastic bags for 2 weeks (the longest period that nits can survive).

## TREATMENT:

**Our first choice will now be to prescribe Natroba Topical Suspension.** The generic for this is **Spinosad**. The prescription for this can be found in our Medication Favorites section of Greenway in the Head Lice folder.

- Safe for children 6 months and above
- contains Benzyl Alcohol
- product is applied to dry hair and scalp by starting at the scalp and working toward the ends of the hair. Product is left on for 10 minutes and then rinsed away with warm water.
- Nit combing is not required with this product but may be done to remove dead lice and nits.
- If live lice are seen 7 days after treatment, a second application should be applied. Our favorites list does have one refill .
- It is OK to shampoo hair anytime after treatment.

**If the Natroba fails after the second treatment, we may prescribe Sklice or Ulefsia.**

Talk to provider first

**For patients who choose not to use a prescription medication, the Cetaphil cleanser technique may be tried.**

- Go to your drugstore and buy **Cetaphil cleanser** (no prescription needed) in the soap department. It works by coating the lice and suffocating them.
- Apply the Cetaphil cleanser throughout the scalp to dry hair.
- After all the hair is wet, wait 2 minutes for Cetaphil to soak in.
- Comb out as much excess cleanser as possible.
- Blow dry your child's hair. It has to be thoroughly dry down to the scalp to suffocate the lice. Expect this to take 3 times longer than it would if the hair was just wet with water.
- The dried Cetaphil will smother the lice. Leave it on your child's hair for at least 8 hours.
- In the morning, wash off the Cetaphil with a regular shampoo.
- Comb out the nits - THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PROCESS
- To cure your child of lice, REPEAT this process twice in 1 and 2 weeks.
- The cure rate can be 97%.

**An alternative to this treatment is an over the counter product called Quit Nits. Although the efficacy of this product has not been studied, it also works by suffocating the lice and comes in an easy to use kit.**

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## References

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