

10 Steps to Keep Ahead of Head Lice

- 1) Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching, flaky or irritated scalp, scabs, or the presence of nits. Anyone can get lice, mainly from direct head-to-head contact or possibly by sharing hats, brushes, beds, pillows, towels, etc.
- 2) Check all household members and close contacts for lice and nits (lice eggs) at least once a week.
- 3) Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris (i.e., dandruff, hair spray droplets, or hair casts). Nits are yellowish-white, oval-shaped, and are **attached** at an angle to the side of the hair shaft.
- 4) Consult a pharmacist, physician, or school nurse before applying pesticides or other lice treatments. If anyone to be treated is pregnant or nursing, has allergies, asthma, or has nits in the eyebrows or lashes, contact your physician. Never use a pesticide or lice treatment on or near the eyes.
- 5) Consider all of your treatment options. Remember, lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution. If you choose alternative methods, they may not have been studied thoroughly enough to determine long-term outcomes. The most effective and safe alternative is manual removal by combing.
- 6) Remove all nits. Separate hair sections and remove nits with a lice comb, baby safe scissors, or your fingernails.
- 7) For lice treatment, follow package directions carefully. Use the products over the sink, not in the tub!
- 8) Wash bedding and all recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in high heat for at least 30 minutes. Combs and brushes should be soaked in hot water (not boiling) for 10 minutes.
- 9) Avoid lice sprays! Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from furniture, rugs, stuffed animals, and car seats.
- 10) Notify your child's school, camp, child-care provider, play partners, and neighborhood parents. **Check for lice on a regular basis.**