

AAP News Parent Plus

INFORMATION FROM YOUR PEDIATRICIAN

Many choices available for treatment of lice

Treating your child's lice doesn't have to be as much of a head scratcher as the insects themselves. Several medications are available along with a few simple ways to help keep head lice from spreading.

Lice are common among children ages 2 to 12 years and having them doesn't mean people have bad hygiene.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests checking children's heads regularly. The tiny insects usually are tan or gray. Their eggs, known as nits, are small white or yellow specks and may be attached to hair near the scalp.

The most common symptom of head lice is itching. While irritating, the insects do not carry diseases. If you aren't sure whether your child has lice, check with a doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist also can tell you which medications will work best in your area.

Over-the-counter medicines like permethrin 1% or pyrethrins often are effective to treat lice. Follow the directions carefully and repeat nine days later even if it looks like the lice are gone, said Cynthia D. Devore, M.D., FAAP, immediate past chair of the AAP Council on School Health Executive Committee.

Sometimes a third treatment is needed. If those remedies don't work, prescription medications also are available.

Parents may choose to remove remaining nits after treatment using a fine-tooth comb on damp hair. The AAP does not recommend using home remedies because they haven't been proven to work, Dr. Devore said.

Lice don't jump, they crawl, so avoid direct head-to-head contact. Spreading lice through combs, brushes and hats is less likely, but children should not share such items. The AAP does not believe children with head lice need to be kept out of school.

If one person in the house has head lice, check the other members and treat any who share a bed with the person.

Use hot water to clean items the infected person's head may have touched in the last two days like clothes, hats, bed sheets and towels. Dry on high heat. Vacuum furniture, carpets, car seats and other fabrics.

For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/19tPmU>.



— *Melissa Jenco*