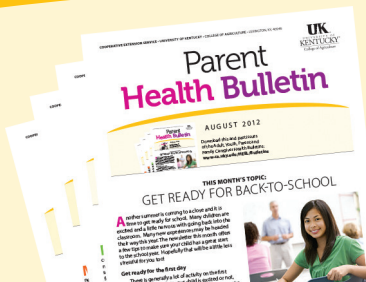


Parent Health Bulletin



SEPTEMBER 2012

Download this and past issues of the Adult, Youth, Parent and Family Caregiver Health Bulletins:
www.ca.uky.edu/HEEL/Bulletins

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: HEAD LICE

If you have a child in pre-school or elementary school, it is possible that at some point, you will have to handle a case of lice. Head lice are common, especially in school settings. Just because someone has lice it does not mean that the person is not clean. These tiny insects move from one person to another when the person touches someone with lice or shares personal items like hats, combs, or bedding.

If your child does get head lice, there are over-the-counter prescription medications to help get rid of the bugs.

How will you know if your child has lice?

There are several symptoms that indicate your child may have head lice:

- **Your child is scratching his or her head** — For many people, these bugs can cause lots of itching.

Continued on the back →



Head lice are NOT spread from pets to humans!

Continued from page 1



If you notice that your child is scratching his or her head, you may want to check for lice.

- **You see adult lice** — Adult lice are about as small as a sesame seed. They are usually seen behind the ears and along the back of the neck.
- **You see lice eggs** — Lice eggs are usually found at the base of the hair. The eggs may look like dandruff. However, unlike dandruff they cannot be easily removed.

Should you take your child to the doctor?

For most children, the over-the-counter shampoo will be able to kill the lice. It may take more than one application. However, if you continue to see lice, you may need to talk to your doctor for stronger medication.

How did my child get lice?

There are several ways that lice can spread from person to person:

- **Head-to-head contact** — Lice usually spread from child-to-child and among family members by head-to-head contact. Lice spread quickly among school age children who work closely with one another.
- **Sharing personal things** — Items such as hats and caps, brushes or combs, and hair pieces can spread the bugs.

- **Home goods** — Sometimes lice can be spread in the home. Things such as towels, clothes, blankets, and pillows can have lice on them. When another person or family member comes in contact with lice, the bugs spread.

What can you do if your child gets lice?

If your child gets lice there are some things you can do to prevent lice from spreading around the family.

- Avoid sharing items such as brushes, bedding, towels, or clothes.
- Use an over-the-counter type treatment for lice.
- Clothing and bedding should be washed in very hot water.
- Toys and blankets in contact with the child's head (such as stuffed animals) should also be washed, if possible. If not they should be sealed in air tight plastic bags for 4-5 days. This will kill lice because they will have no nutrition.

Adult lice are about as small as a sesame seed. They are usually seen behind the ears and along the back of the neck.

It is hard to prevent the spread of lice among children and families. You can ask your child not to share hats or personal items such as brushes with others. It may still be hard to prevent head lice from spreading. Your best plan, is to be prepared for lice so that if your child gets them, you will be prepared and know how to control and stop the spread.

SOURCE:

Mayo Clinic. Head Lice. June 2011. Accessed at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/head-lice/DS00953/METHOD=print>

Parent
Health Bulletin

Written by: Nicole Peritore
Edited by: Connee Wheeler
Designed by: Rusty Manseau
Stock images: 123RF.com