

FACT SHEET

# HEAD LICE

(Pediculosis Capitis)

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| <b><i>What are Head Lice?</i></b>                     | Head lice are tiny, wingless, grayish-tan insects that live on the scalp and hair of humans. The eggs, called nits, are easier to see than the lice themselves. Nits are usually found attached to hair shafts close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the neck.   |
| <b><i>How are they spread?</i></b>                    | Head lice are mainly spread by direct contact with an infested person's hair. They are also spread through the sharing of personal items such as combs, brushes, scarves, hats, headphones, sleeping bags, and stuffed animals.  |
| <b><i>What are the early signs?</i></b>               | The first clue that a child has head lice is frequent scratching of the scalp. To check for infestation, carefully examine the hair around the back of the neck and behind the ears.   |
| <b><i>How are they treated?</i></b>                   | Kalamazoo County HCS recommends using an olive oil treatment. Cover hair and scalp with a generous amount of olive oil, then cover head with a plastic shower cap or bandana and leave on for eight to twelve hours. Comb through hair and remove all nits (eggs). Wash out with regular shampoo. Nits cannot be washed away like dirt or dandruff; they must be removed with a special comb designed for this purpose. Repeat treatment every four days until no nits are found, for two weeks. Continue to check the hair daily for nits for two more weeks. |
| <b><i>When is ok to return to daycare/school?</i></b> | Please check with your child's school/daycare regarding their policy on head lice.   |
| <b><i>Other important information</i></b>             | Encourage children not to share personal items such as combs, brushes, scarves, and hats. Remember that nits cannot be washed away like dirt or dandruff. Lice can live 48-72 hours without a human host and cannot live on family pets.   |

*This fact sheet is not intended to replace the advice of your physician. Parents should contact their healthcare provider if they have concerns regarding their child's health. If you have general questions, please contact a Kalamazoo County nurse at 373-5264 or 373-5267.*