

Prevention

Check your child's head weekly, especially if there are cases of head lice in your child's classroom. Early detection helps! The quick approach is to have your child bend over a clean bathtub or sink and vigorously brush the hair from root to ends (upside down). This will often dislodge bugs, and they are easily visible in the bathtub or sink. A more thorough approach is to divide your child's hair into sections and comb through several strands at a time, with a strong light, to check for nits. Nits are very small and light-colored. They look a lot like dandruff flakes, except that they will not brush off because they are glued to the hair shaft.

Treatment

Advice on Lice considers RID to be the best over-the-counter treatment, but they recommend leaving the shampoo on for 30-40 minutes instead of just 10. Any shampoo treatment MUST be followed by thorough combing to remove nits(eggs). The shampoo products only kill live bugs, not the nits. You must comb your child's hair daily and then follow with another shampoo treatment in 10 days. The plastic combs that are included in the shampoo treatment boxes are useless. Advice on Lice recommends the Lice Meister comb, which is a fine-toothed metal comb.

Combing and Follow-Up

This is easiest to do on hair that has been moistened with conditioner. It is more effective and much more comfortable for the child. Advice on Lice recommends Pantene or BioSilk conditioners, which work well for combing. Any bugs or nits can be flushed down the toilet. Hairbrushes, ponytail holders, etc. can be placed in a ziplock bag and stored in the freezer overnight. Extreme cold will kill bugs and nits.

Notification

PLEASE let the school, your teacher, and the other parents in your class know if you discover that your child has lice. It is a very common problem, especially in a large school with such young children. Having head lice is in no way connected to hygiene or cleanliness, and there should be no stigma attached to it! As Karen Franco says, lice do not discriminate. If everyone is made aware of the lice, we will be able to get rid of them much faster, with fewer families affected. Your child should stay home from school until all live bugs have been removed, and should check in with the nurse on the morning that they return post-treatment. It's important to continue to comb twice daily to remove any nits, since they could hatch and then spread to others, until the second shampoo treatment is done 10 days after the first treatment.