Head Lice

When your child begins child care, preschool or elementary school, she runs a risk of head lice infestation. Many parents are appalled by the thought of their children having a case of head lice. Don’t worry, infestations are not harmful nor are they an indication of poor hygiene or dirty hair.

Head Lice Facts

- Head lice are crawling insects, about the size of sesame seeds. They cannot jump or fly.
- Head lice thrive in human hair, feeding on blood from the scalp.
- Infestation of head lice causes itching of the scalp.
- "Nits" the eggs of the lice are attached to strands of hair and because of their white color and abundance, are easier to see than the insect.
  The nape of the neck is a common place for nits to be found.
- A head louse cannot live more than 24 hours away from a human host.
- Head lice do not thrive on pets.
- Transmission of head lice occurs through head to head contact and sharing of brushes, hats, clothing, bedding, towels, etc.
- Treatment of infestation is simple.

Tips for Treating Head Lice Infestation

- Check all family members for lice and nits. Only those infested should be treated.
- Talk with your pharmacist about over-the-counter lice treatments.
- Remember that all lice treatment products are pesticides. If you choose to utilize an over-the-counter treatment, follow the directions carefully and precisely. Keep these products away from eye areas.
- Remove all nits by separating hair into sections and utilizing a lice comb.
  Check your child's hair with a lice comb every 2 or 3 days for a few weeks to insure all lice and nits are gone.
- Wash bedding, towels and recently worn clothing in hot water and dry in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Place anything made with material that cannot be washed (stuffed animals, pillows) into plastic bags for two weeks.
- Vacuum, vacuum, vacuum! Vacuuming is the safest way to remove lice and nits from furniture, carpet, stuffed animals, head rests, and car seats.
- Protect others. Notify your child's school, child care provider, teacher, and the parents of classmates and friends.

SOURCE: Center for Disease Control, Atlanta Georgia