

## DEFINITION

### Diagnostic Findings

- Nits (white eggs) are firmly attached to hairs.
- Unlike dandruff, nits can't be shaken off.
- Gray bugs (lice) are  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch long, move quickly, and are difficult to see.
- The scalp itches and has a rash.
- The back of the neck is the favorite area.
- The nits are easier to see than the lice because they are white and very numerous.

### Cause

Head lice only live on human beings and can be spread quickly by using the hat, comb, or brush of an infected person or simply by close contact. Anyone can get lice despite good health habits and frequent hair washing. The nits (eggs) normally hatch in about 1 week. Pubic lice ("crabs") are slightly different but are treated the same way. They can be transmitted from bedding or clothing and do not signify sexual contact.

### Expected Course

With treatment, all lice and nits will be killed.

## HOME TREATMENT

**Antilice Shampoo.** Your child's antilice shampoo is \_\_\_\_\_.

Pour about 2 ounces of the shampoo into the hair. Add a little warm water to work up a lather. Scrub the hair and scalp for 10 minutes, by the clock. Rinse the hair thoroughly and dry it with a towel. These shampoos kill both the lice and the nits. Repeat the antilice shampoo once in 7 days to prevent reinfection. (NOTE: A new prescription antilice shampoo called Nix only requires one application.)

**Removing Nits.** Remove the nits by back combing with a fine-tooth comb or pull them out individually. The nits can be loosened using a mixture of half vinegar and half rubbing alcohol. Even though the nits are dead, most schools will not allow children to return if nits are present. Obviously, the hair does not need to be shaved to cure lice.

**Lice in the Eyelashes.** If you see any lice or nits in the eyelashes, apply petrolatum to the eyelashes twice a day for 8 days. The lice won't survive.

**Cleaning the House.** Lice can't live for more than 72 hours (3 days) off the human body. Your child's room should be vacuumed. Combs and brushes should be soaked for 1 hour in a solution made from the antilice shampoo. Wash your child's sheets, blankets, and pillowcases in hot water. Items that can't be washed (hats or coats) can be set aside in plastic bags for 3 weeks (the longest that nits can survive). Antilice sprays or fumigation of the house is unnecessary.

**Contagiousness.** Check the heads of everyone else living in your home. If any have scalp rashes, sores, or itching, they should be treated with the antilice shampoo even if lice and nits are not seen. Your child can return to school after one treatment with the shampoo. Reemphasize to your child that he or she should not share combs and hats.



## CALL OUR OFFICE

During regular hours if

- Itching interferes with sleep.
- The rash is not cleared by 1 week after treatment.
- The rash clears and then returns.
- New eggs appear in the hair.
- The sores start to spread or look infected.