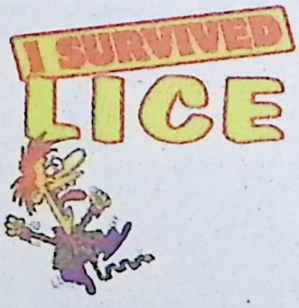


Slaying the Tiny Vampires



Have you ever got infected with the tiny wingless vampires that cling firmly to your hair and keep sucking your blood out of your scalp? Undoubtedly they can be hard parasite insects to get rid of, but your patience and a few easy tips directed by your doctor can keep the bugs at bay, and you'll be well on your way to keeping your family lice-free.

•Commonly known as head lice, This itchy infestation, also called pediculosiscapitis, most commonly spreads through close personal contact and by sharing personal belongings.

They are not dangerous, but could be very annoying.Head lice are a very common problem, affecting millions of people each year — especially preschool and elementary school-aged children and their close contacts. Be patient and follow the treatments and prevention tips.

Signs and symptoms

- Strong itching. An allergic reaction to the saliva that lice inject during feeding may result in itchy red bumps on your scalp, neck and shoulders.
- Adult lice on scalp. The most common spots to find adult lice are behind your ears and along the back of your neck.
- Lice eggs (nits) on hair shafts. Nits resemble tiny willow buds. Nits can be mistaken for dandruff, but unlike dandruff, they can't be easily brushed out of hair.

Treatment

Lice can be treated with over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, but depending on the severity your doctor might prescribe some medications.In most of the cases a medicated shampoo, cream rinse, or lotion can help to kill the lice. Medicated lice treatments usually kill the lice and nits, but it may take a few days for the itching to stop. For very resistant lice, an oral medication might be prescribed.

Remember whatever you are applying on your scalp is basically a form of insecticide. Therefore following the direction is an imperative. Applying too much medication or using it too frequently can increase the risk of causing harm. Treatment may be unsuccessful if the medication is not used correctly or if the lice are resistant to it. After treatment, your doctor may suggest combing out the nits with a fine-tooth comb and also may recommend repeating the treatment in 7 to 10 days to kill any newly hatched nits.

Keep in mind:

- Lice are highly contagious and can spread quickly from person to person, especially in group settings (schools, childcare centers, slumber parties, sports activities, and camps).
- Cleanliness and personal hygiene have little bearing on whether you get lice.The greatest risk factor for getting head lice is coming into contact with someone who already has lice.It's no reflection on your hygiene habits or those of your children, and it's not a failure on your part as a parent if your child gets head lice.
- Lice can live for about two days without a meal, and nits will die within a week if they're not kept at the same temperature as that found near the human scalp. That's why it's so uncommon for people to be infected with lice by any method other than head-to-head contact.
- Lice infestation can be a persistent nuisance, especially in group settings. If your child still has lice and you've followed every recommendation, it could be because some nits were left behind your child is still being exposed to someone with lice
- Though they can't fly or jump, these tiny parasites have specially adapted claws that allow them to crawl and cling firmly to hair. They spread mainly through head-to-head contact, but sharing clothing, bed linens, combs, brushes, and hats can also help pass them along.
- Kids are most prone to catching lice because they tend to have close physical contact with each other and often share personal items. But that does not mean adults live in a risk-free zone.
- Try not to share your hats, scarves, coats, combs, brushes, hair decorations and other personal belongings in a social gathering.
- Wash clothing, linens, combs, and brushes with hot water. Vacuum floors and furniture. But don't spend too much time or money; lice can't live long if they're not on a human host. ■