

## **HEAD LICE FACT SHEET**

**Parents are kindly requested to keep children off school until they are treated and lice free.**

### **What are head lice?**

A head louse is a tiny, wingless insect that can attach to a person's hair, where it feeds on extremely small amounts of blood drawn from the scalp. Lice aren't dangerous and they don't spread disease, however they are very irritating. Lice eggs (nits) are seen more commonly than lice in children.

### **What are the symptoms of head lice?**

- Severe itching of the scalp
- Nits (tiny oval specks that are reddish brown and attached to the hair about an inch away from the head, often behind the ears and around the neck)
- Lice (reddish brown tiny insects on the hair or scalp)
- Small, red bumps or a rash on the scalp, that may crust or ooze if severe
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck

### **Is it serious?**

Head lice are not dangerous and they do not spread disease, but they are extremely contagious.

### **How do head lice spread?**

Kids play in close proximity, so lice have opportunities to crawl from one little head to another.

**Prevention tips:** Tie back your child's hair and remind your child not to share hats, combs, helmets or hair accessories with other children.

Some people use lavender or neem oil as a natural repellent. You can mix these oils with water and mist hair.

### **How are head lice treated?**

- Over the counter treatments: Headlice may be treated with shampoo. In Indonesia you can buy Pedi Tox. Read and follow directions carefully, and remember that you must repeat treatment in 1 week as the shampoo will only kill LICE, not NITS. When the nits hatch treatment must be repeated.
- Conditioner and Comb Treatments: Comb hair conditioner through dry hair. Using a comb, divide hair into sections and comb through using a fine tooth nit comb, wiping the comb with a tissue and checking for eggs/lice as you go. This must be repeated 4 or 5 times over the whole head and then again every second day until no live lice or eggs are found.
- Removal of Head Lice and Nits: Lice shampoos DO NOT remove the eggs from the hair. The eggs must be combed out and/or manually removed. Sit behind your child in a room with good lighting to comb through the hair, one section at a time. Use a fine toothed nit comb. Combs with metal teeth work best. Your child's hair should be clean, wet, well combed or brushed to remove tangles before using the louse comb. A conditioner may help lubricate the hair. Comb through each section until no more lice or nits are found. Clean the comb frequently with a paper towel to remove any lice or eggs.
- Continue to comb daily until no live lice are found, for about 3 weeks. Adult female lice cement eggs to the base of the hair shaft near the scalp.

**Combs, brushes, hats, motorbike helmets and other hair accessories in contact with an infested person should be washed in hot water to dislodge any lice or nits, and should not be shared with other family members.**

- Treatment of clothes/household cleaning: All items your child has been in contact with in the past two days, such as towels, pillowcases, sheets, pajamas, clothes, coats, hats and similar items should be washed in hot water and dried on high heat for a least 30 minutes.

**If your symptoms don't improve after treatment, or suddenly worsen, contact a doctor for advice.**