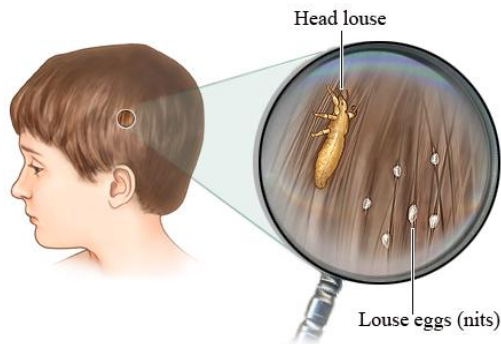


## Head Lice

("Cooties," Pediculosis)

### What are head lice?

Head lice are small bugs that live on the human scalp. They are about 1/8 inch long and gray in color. Sometimes you can see head lice crawling in the hair. You may see empty eggshells, called nits from new head lice that have hatched. They look like small grains of rice on the hair. Your child did not get head lice because your child's friends or school are "dirty."



### How will head lice affect my child?

Head lice spread from person to person by direct contact with hair and by sharing items. Children may tell you that it feels like something is crawling in their hair and scratch their heads. Sometimes the scalp gets red with itching.

There may be sores that get infected. The sores will look crusty or ooze fluid.

### How are head lice treated?

The medicated shampoo or rinse to use is: \_\_\_\_\_.

- It is important to follow the directions you are given when using the shampoo or rinse. A second treatment may be needed in one week. Follow directions on the bottle.
- Use **hot** water to wash all bedding and clothes that have come in contact with your child.
- Instead of washing, you may put items in the dryer on a **hot** setting for at least 30 minutes. This must be done at the same time your child is treated to prevent more head lice. Only items that have been in contact with your child's head in the last 48 hours before treatment should be cleaned. Lice normally can't live more than 48 hours when they are off of the scalp.
- Soak hair items such as combs, brushes, or barrettes in **hot** water for one hour. Do not let your child share hair care items or clothes with others.
- Your child should not be kept out of school. Your child may go back to school the morning after treatment.
- Manual removal of nits with a nit comb or fingernails is essential following treatment with medicated shampoos. A fine toothed comb is used for removing nits from **wet hair**. Take small sections of hair and gently comb to remove the nits. Doing this right after using the medicated shampoo or rinse works best.
- All household members should be checked for lice but only those with live lice or nits need to be treated. Anyone who sleeps in the same bed should also be treated.
- Cutting the hair short will not cure or prevent head lice.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**