

**Recap of Lice Informational Meeting**  
**Given by Pediatric Consultant, Dr. Timothy Kenefick**  
**at Tokeneke School**

Thurs, February 2, 9:30AM

**Overview/Background on Lice**

- Lice have been around for thousands of years.
- There are 6-12MM infestations/year in the US and it costs consumers billions of dollars annually to address the issue.
- **They are not a major health threat**, just an annoyance. They do not carry or pass on other diseases.
- Lice are dependent upon humans and cannot last more than a couple hours away from a human head.

**The Cycle of a Louse (=singular for Lice)**

**1) A Live Louse**

- about 2mm in size, i.e. sesame seed. It changes in color to match the host's hair/head, varying from grayish white to tan.
- female will live up to 3-4 weeks and once mature, can lay up to 10 eggs/day.

**2) Egg**

- Once laid by the louse, firmly attaches to base of hair shaft with a glue-like substance.
- They can be camouflaged with pigment to match the person's hair color.
- Incubated by human body heat, typically hatch within 8-9 days, depending on weather/temps.

**3) Nit**

- Empty egg casings laid by the Louse.

**4) Nymph**

- A newly hatched Louse. Will pass through 3 nymph stages over 9-12 days before becoming an adult louse.
- Can lay eggs approximately 1.5 days after becoming an adult.

**If untreated, the above cycle can repeat itself every three weeks.**

**Other Lice Facts**

- In the US, head lice infestation is most common among preschool and elementary aged children.
- All socioeconomic groups are affected.
- Not significantly influenced by hair length/frequent brushing. However, in US where hair brushing/grooming is more common, there are likely to be fewer

live lice on a person's head (more like a dozen) vs. other cultures with different grooming practices.

- Lice cannot hop/fly. They crawl and are primarily transferred by direct head-to-head contact.
- Preventative sprays typically do not work.

### **Reasons to Suspect Your Child Has Lice**

- Itching
- Someone with whom they are close has it.

### **If you Suspect, The Best Way to Find Lice = Wet Combing (& See YouTube Video Link below)**

- Sit child down with wet hair and conditioner coating the hair (Pantene was mentioned to be a good one to use).
- Use a Nit Comb (ones that have 2 rows of teeth are the best). These are sold at drug stores, i.e. CVS.
- Take the straight edge of the comb and drag it along the scalp and outward.
- Go along the scalp and comb/slide every section of the hair from the scalp outward.
- The eggs can be the most challenging to scrape out. Use a small towel to wipe off your comb after each scraping.
- To clean the comb after use/between children, simply rinse/use soapy water.
- If infestation is a concern, the above should be done once a week and can take 20-30 minutes.

<http://dsc.discovery.com/videos/dirty-jobs-thats-lice.html>

An infested case:

<http://dsc.discovery.com/videos/dirty-jobs-severe-infestation.html>

### **Treatment-IF Lice are Discovered**

- **You should only treat your child if you an egg within 1/8” from the scalp or a live Louse. It is important not to confuse eggs or nits with dandruff, hair casts or other hair debris.**
- If you see evidence, invest in a treatment (available in drug stores) such as “Nix” or “Rid.” **Though following manufacturer’s directions is in general a good thing, most pediculocides (i.e. nix, rid) work best if used twice on days 0 and 9 or alternatively thrice on days 0, 7 and 13-15.**
- **Generally, reinfestation can occur because people do not follow up.**
- Alternatively, some have found that coating the hair with mayonnaise/olive oil can be effective in “smothering” the lice when left on overnight. However, it would have to be repeated weekly.
- **It is only important to clean items that have been in contact with the infested person within the last 48 hours. You can vacuum or wash/dry**

most items with which the person has come into contact or seal them in plastic bags for two weeks.

- This said, lice like to be on heads. They cannot live for more than 24-48 hours away from a human head.

**This is a Community Issue, Not a School Problem!**

- Lice are transmitted by head-head contact. Young children generally play close to one another in this manner. This is why it is so common among this age group.
- It is near impossible to prevent head-head contact.
- **Screenings are a Lose-Lose situation.**
  - o Given that the recommended way to screen/detect lice is via a wet combing process (described above), it is near impossible for a School/other type of organization to effectively conduct that type of inspection.
  - o When screenings are performed, the risk of missing lice is very high. Therefore the responsibility falls on the caregiver(s).