

Pesticides and You

News from the National Coalition Against the Misuse of Pesticides (NCAMP)

One in a Series of NCAMP "How-To's"

Itching for School Lice Solutions?

While the mere mention of lice is enough to make most people's skin crawl, head lice are a frequent problem among school children. It is important for both parents and school personnel to be well-informed about good practices for lice prevention and control.

- Head lice, *Pediculus capitis*, are typically found on the head, primarily around the back of the ears, the nape of the neck, and the crown. Adults may also be found on head gear, combs, brushes, and scarves. A single adult female, 2-4 mm in size, may lay 50-100 tiny eggs, or nits, each less than 1mm in size. The lice life cycle is approximately 21 days.

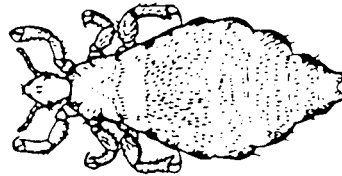
- Excessive scratching or skin inflammation from bites are common signs of infestation. Children or adults showing symptoms should be immediately examined for nits and adults.

- Report the infestation to school officials and the parents of your children's playmates.

- Manually remove eggs, young and adult lice with forceps, fingernails or a nitcomb. Using coconut oil as a lubricant, divide the hair into small sections, searching each one thoroughly and then putting it aside. Lice and nits

should be killed by immersion in boiling water to prevent transmission of disease. Then wash hair and scalp with a coconut oil based shampoo, or one with a high content of sodium lauryl sulfate (a coconut oil derivative).

- Nit combs are special fine toothed combs which allow hair to pass but catch nits. The Derbac™ comb is widely available or can be ordered from Cereal



Adult Head Louse

Soaps Company, Box 329, Boonton, NJ 07005, 201/334-2676. A metal flea comb sold in pet shops can also be used.

- Check for lice and nits nightly for 12 days, and monitor regularly for signs of reinfestation.

- Provide each child with separate storage space for head coverings and other clothing at school.

- Vacuum areas where nit carrying hair may have fallen, including upholstery, carpets, and living spaces.

- Clothing and linens should be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer. Combs and brushes may be boiled at 150 degrees for 5-10 minutes or stored in well-sealed plastic bags for 14-30 days.

- **We advise against the use of lice shampoos, as none of these products kill all of the lice eggs, and therefore combing is still required.** Lindane containing products should never be used because of their serious toxicity and questionable efficacy (see page 7). Other pesticidal shampoos also pose health hazards.

NEVER TREAT ROOMS

NCAMP, the Centers for Disease Control, the National Pediculosis Association, and the Bio-Integral Resource Center all strongly discourage the use of space treatments for lice control, as they do not aid in infestation control and may pose serious health hazards. We urge you to impress this point upon your school officials and other parents. Recently, a North Carolina school illegally fogged with lindane for lice (see page 4). Do not assume your school is well informed regarding good practices.

For more information, write for NCAMP's \$2 lice fact packet.