

TIP SHEET – Head LICE



What are head lice? The head louse, or *Pediculus humanus capitis*, is a parasitic insect that can be found on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes of people. Head lice feed on human blood several times a day and live close to the human scalp. Head lice are not known to spread disease.

Head lice move by crawling - they cannot hop or fly.

- Head lice are spread by **DIRECT** Contact with the hair of an infested person.
- Anyone who comes into **DIRECT head-to-head contact** with someone who already has Head Lice is at greatest risk.
- The Head Lice do not fly or jump to another person. **DIRECT** contact is necessary for transmission.
- Lice is spread by **DIRECT** contact with clothing (such as hats, scarves, coats) and personal items (such as combs, brushes, or towels) used by an infested person.
- Head lice and nits are found on the scalp, typically around the ears and neckline

Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp

How do we treat head lice in the hospital?



Treatment requires a physician order. Follow these treatment steps:

1. Treat/ Retreat according to instructions
2. Have the infested person put on a clean gown and change linen after treatment.
3. The nits (head lice eggs) must be combed out.
4. Nit (head lice egg) combs should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft.
5. After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice once per day or more often may decrease the chance of self-reinfestation.

*To obtain a comb without treatment, enter a Material Services ticket on MCSS ServiceNow PMM 229577

Additional measures:

- Bag clothing and send home or maintain in bags for 2 weeks.
- Visitors and family members who are symptomatic should refrain from visiting until assessment and/or 24 hours after initial treatment

How do I protect myself?

1. Place the patient in **Contact Isolation** until 24 hours after initial treatment.
2. A gown and gloves are required.
3. NOTE-No additional PPE required than gown and gloves. No added caps, booties or cover suites needed.
4. Standard room cleaning after treatment.
5. Patient does not need to be moved to another room.