

Pointers For Parents

Lice: A Common Problem Among Children

(NAPSA)—Lice. It happens even in the best of schools. The school nurse contacts you and says that there's an outbreak of lice. How did it happen? Where did they come from? What can you do?

Lice are small clear-colored insects that feed on blood. Attracted to heat and odors, the female louse finds a host and begins laying her eggs. She attaches the almost microscopic eggs one at a time to hairs or clothing. The term "nit" refers to the eggs of lice and "nit-picking" simply means picking at something small.

Of the three main species (head, body, and pubic lice) the head louse is the most common in schools. It is generally believed that they are spread by normal contact among children and from children to parents and other family members.

"Sharing of towels, combs and hairbrushes, and the close proximity of children on school buses, playground tussles or contact sports all contribute to passing lice from one child to another," says Dr. Mark Lacey, Director of Technical and Field Services for the National Pest Management Association (NPMA).

Infestations of lice can begin with a single child bringing them from home. Often, 15 to 20 percent of the school population is found to be infested before positive diagnosis is made. Lice are a medical condition and are best referred to the family physician.



In a school setting, lice can spread quickly from child to child before it's diagnosed.

Treatment normally consists of prescribed insecticidal shampoos, the use of a fine toothed comb to remove adults and nits, and hot cycle, machine washing and drying of clothing, bedding, and towels used by infested individuals.

However, a pest management professional should be consulted to provide informational documentation concerning lice and their control. Also, although lice removed from a human will die within 48 hours, it may be necessary at times to apply a non-residual insecticide to ensure that control is achieved.

For more information on head lice or pest management, visit the NPMA Web site at www.pestworld.org.