

MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES

HOW TO CHECK YOUR CHILD'S HEAD FOR LICE

A lice infestation exists when **live lice or nits less than ½ inch from the scalp** can be observed. Nits farther away from the scalp have already hatched. An adult louse is the size of a sesame seed; younger lice are smaller. Nits (lice eggs) are about size of a knot in thread, hard to see and often confused with dandruff. They are yellowish or grayish white, oval shaped and attached to the hair shaft with a glue-like substance. Unlike dandruff, nits cannot be easily flicked away with your finger.

Here are 4 steps to help you check your child's hair.

STEP 1: Gather your tools including your glasses, a magnifying glass, and a pointed stick for separating the hair. A toothpick, paint brush handle, chop sticks or any pointed object that will not scratch the scalp will do. Hair clips to separate the hair are very helpful.

STEP 2: Find a good spot to examine your child's head. It should be comfortable, have natural daylight or a very bright light. Explain to your child that you will be examining his/her head for five to fifteen minutes. Use this time to talk to your child, listen to your child read, or watch a movie.

STEP 3: Start at the nape of the neck and cover the entire head. Part the hair in a straight line and examine the exposed scalp. Proceed to cover the entire scalp making parts every 1/4 inch from the previous one and examine the scalp.

STEP 4: Look for live lice and nits less than ½ inch from the scalp. Live lice will hide at the bottom and *behind* the hair shaft near the scalp. Look long enough for your eyes to focus and to spot any speck or any slight movement. Live lice are tiny and they shy away from light however their quick movement may catch your attention.

For further information on how to identify a head lice infestation and their treatment go to these CDC websites:

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>

http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>