

Scratching My Head Over This Kelly Pomeroy, M.H.

It's back to school time and with it comes the possibility of the most common school illnesses; stomach flu, pink eye and lice. Just the saying the word lice makes my head itch! Recently there was an outbreak in my area and so I checked my family's hair. I found 2 strands with the egg sack (nit) attached in my daughters hair. I pulled those strands out, looked at them over a microscope and confirmed it was an egg sack. My daughter cried her sweet eyes out and we began treating her hair. I will go into details of that soon. Just a few days ago an article came up in the news regarding an infestation in 42 states in the U.S. of super lice that do not respond to over the counter treatments. We need to arm ourselves with knowledge and understanding to help our families out in a safe and effective manner. Many of the prescription and over the counter treatments are caustic and toxic to the body and in this case, not effective.



Louse (*Pediculus humanis capitis*) or lice, plural for louse, are wingless, six legged

parasites that survive by sucking small amounts of blood from the head. They have claws that grasp the hair. Lice do not jump, hop or fly. However, they lay eggs, also called nits, about $\frac{1}{4}$ down from the scalp on the hair strand. They are yellowish brown in color, about the size of a grain of salt, and attach at an angle on the hair. The attachment will not move easily unless combed off by a nit comb. The eggs take about 7-10 days to hatch. Once hatched, a louse can live up to 30 days on a human, but only survive 24 hours off of a human. Lice are not transmitted via pets. Transmission of this parasite is in head to head contact. Infected bedding, furniture, clothing and brushes can also transmit these bugs. Contrary to common belief, people of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds get lice. Symptoms include itching mainly around the ears, back

of the neck and crown of the head. Some may not experience itching. If you suspect a lice infestation, give a visual look throughout the scalp of the head. Both nits and louse are visible to the human eye. The nit is about the size of a grain of salt and a louse is about the size of a sesame seed. Lice have no real medical threat. Nevertheless, they are itchy, emotionally upsetting and exhausting to care for. However, if itching is severe, it can lead to infections in the scalp.

Treating lice in my home was a detour in our summer to say the least. After some research, I made up an effective solution of apple cider vinegar, tea tree oil, eucalyptus oil, lavender oil and water. Apple cider vinegar helps restore natural pH to the scalp. Tea tree oil is reported to be the most effective in repelling and eliminating lice. Eucalyptus and rosemary also are considered to be effective. Lavender is great to sooth itching. I first washed and rinsed the hair, and then, without adding conditioning agents, I poured this solution through each of my family member's hair. The solution actually has a rather nice smell. The lavender seemed to calm down the apple cider vinegar smell. I then put coconut oil on the hair. Coconut oil is reported to suffocate the lice so that they cannot live nor grasp onto the hair. I combed through my daughter's oiled hair with a nit comb and braided about 20 strands in her hair so I could keep a watch on things. Throughout the day I would spray the hair with the apple cider essential oil solution I had made. I also sprayed couches and my car. All bedding and clothing worn was put in a hot water wash to sanitize them. These parasites can't live in temperatures of extreme heat or cold. You can also bag items for 24 hours to ensure lice are killed if you cannot wash these items.

These oils were very effective for my family. You can also use them as preventative. People have added a few drops of tea tree oil to the shampoo they are applying. Additionally, I would consider eating lots of garlic and the super immune garlic formula to deter the parasites from you. No more scratching your head about how to treat lice naturally. You've got what it takes to get those creepy crawlers out! Best wishes! Below is a recipe for the rinse I used.

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