Module 10 - Managing Head Lice in Child Care Settings

Integrated Pest Management for Child Care Settings
What are head lice?

- Insects with six legs and no wings.
- They live exclusively in human hair (head, eyebrows and even eyelashes).
- They feed on blood.
- They chew rather than suck blood (not like a mosquito).
- Eggs (nits) are cemented to hair shaft.
Identify head lice

Photo by CDC
Head lice

- Females lay eggs (nits) that are glued to the hair shaft.
- Lice can live as long as 30 days on a person.
- Eggs can last up to two weeks.
- They die quickly (24-36 hours) after falling off a person.
- Having head lice is also known as pediculosis.
How do you get head lice?

• Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene or lack of cleanliness. Anyone can get them.

• They are easily transferred among children and people in close contact.

• Sharing brushes, hats, clothes, or bedding can transfer head lice.
What is the harm?

• Head lice are easily spread.
• They cause itching, sometimes severe.
• Bites may create skin lesions that ooze or crust.
• Panicked reactions may lead to dangerous treatments.
• Head lice do not transmit diseases!
If a child in day care has head lice

- Do not spray pesticides! Regular cleaning is enough.
- Isolate the child’s coat, hat and other belongings.
- Call the parent or guardian and explain.
- Warn the parents of the other children that head lice have been found, but do not identify the child.
Inspect all children’s heads for lice

- Use a bright light and magnification.
- Look around the base of the skull and the ears, ¼ inch up the hair shaft for nits.
- Look for live lice, nits and marks on the skin.
Heat kills head lice

• Head lice are killed by dry heat.
• Use a hot dryer to decontaminate bedding, belongings, stuffed animals and other soft items.
• Place dry items into a dryer set on hot for 20 minutes.
• Washing is not necessary, but is OK.
Head lice treatment

- Combing with a fine toothed metal comb is good for removing live lice and nits.
Head lice shampoos

- Over-the-counter and prescription shampoos are used to kill head lice.
- These have pesticides in them.
- Head lice are commonly resistant to ingredients in these shampoos.
- Do not attempt to treat a child in your care.
- Parents must speak with their child’s doctor to decide which treatment is right.
Centers for Disease Control

• For instructions about the use of lice shampoos and other treatments see: http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html
Don’t use over-the-counter sprays and foggers

- Over-the-counter sprays and foggers are ineffective for controlling head lice.
- They do not belong in child care centers.
- They are dangerous to children's health.
Pest management

• Head lice die quickly (24-36 hours) after falling off a person.

• Pesticides are not necessary for controlling lice that may have fallen off a person.

• Head lice are technically not an issue of pest management, since lice shampoos are considered medicine.
Take away messages

• Lice are not a medical emergency but must be taken seriously.
• Isolate belongings to prevent spread.
• Check children’s heads and contact parents.
• Do not use pesticides or lice shampoos in a child care setting.
• Isolation and regular cleaning are enough to protect children and staff from head lice.
Excellent Resource

• [www.headlice.org](http://www.headlice.org) The National Pediculosis Association website with information about identifying lice, managing lice, what parents, teachers and doctors need to know.