

HEAD LICE

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What are Head Lice?

Head lice are small insects, about the size of a sesame seed. They live on the scalp and feed by sucking blood. Head lice may turn colors from white or grey to red or dark brown when they are filled with blood. After the female louse mates, she lays four or five nits which are glued so strongly to the hair shafts that ordinary washing and brushing of the hair will not remove them. After seven to ten days the nits hatch, new lice mature, mate, and begin the cycle of infestation all over again, if not treated. A single louse can lay as many as 150 eggs during its typical 30-day life span. Hundreds of nits may be found on the head of an infested person.

How is it spread?

Head lice is spread by head to head contact; or by sharing personal items such as hats, combs, brushes, ribbons, barrettes, coats, towels or bedding. Lice can also be spread by the placing your head on furniture, rugs, or car seats recently used by someone with lice. Theater and airline seats and head phones are sometimes linked to spread of the insect, as are piling coats, hats, scarfs on top of each other.

How is it treated?

- Contact your doctor or the Health Department to verify the need for treatment.
- If infested at the same time, all family members should be checked for head lice and treated.
- Non-prescription lice shampoo or creme rinse is available at the drug store. Read and follow the directions carefully.
- Do NOT treat pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants, or children under 2. (Consult with a physician).
- If new nits or newly hatched lice are found, retreat according to manufacturers' recommendations, usually 7-10 days after the initial treatment.
- After shampooing, the nits (eggs) must be removed with a metal nit comb.
- Check head and remove nits daily.

What else should be done?

- Machine wash all clothing & bedding in hot soapy water and dry in a hot, machine dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Head lice and nits can be killed either by freezing for 24 hours or by sealing articles in plastic bags for 14 days.
- Combs and brushes can be cleaned effectively by soaking in hot water (140-165 degrees F) for 15 minutes or washing with lice shampoo.
- Vacuum mattresses, pillows, carpeting, upholstered furniture, and car upholstery. Maintain these good

SYMPTOMS OF HEAD LICE

- Itching, especially around the ears and back of the neck.
- Head lice do not cause disease, but infection may develop at scratch sites.
- Evidence of crawling lice or nits attached to the hair.

How are head lice prevented?

- Head Lice treatments should not be used for prevention.
- Do not share personal items: combs, brushes, hats.
- If not in use, place hats and scarves in coat pockets.
- Notify school staff and playmates' parents to be alert of additional cases.



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10 Steps to Keep Ahead of Head Lice

- 1) Watch for signs of head lice, such as frequent head scratching. Anyone can get lice, mainly from direct head-to-head contact, sharing hats, brushes, etc.
- 2) Check all family members for lice and nits (lice eggs) at least once a week.
- 3) Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris, (i.e., dandruff, hair spray droplets or hair casts). Nits are yellowish-white, oval shaped and are attached at an angle to the side of the hair shaft.
- 4) Consult a pharmacist or physician before applying pesticides or other lice treatments if anyone involved is pregnant or nursing, has allergies, asthma, or has nits in the eyebrows or lashes. Never use a pesticide or lice treatment on or near the eyes.
- 5) Consider all of your treatment options. Remember, lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution. If you choose alternative methods, they may not have been studied thoroughly enough to determine long-term outcomes. The only completely safe alternative is manual removal by combing.
- 6) Remove all nits. Separate hair sections and remove nits with a lice comb, baby safe scissors or your fingernails.
- 7) For lice treatment, follow package directions carefully. Use the products over the sink, not in the tub!
- 8) Wash bedding and recently worn clothing in hot water (above 130°F) and dry in high heat for 30 minutes. Combs and brushes should be soaked in hot water (not boiling) for 10 minutes.
- 9) Avoid lice sprays! Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and car seats.
- 10) Notify your child's school, camp, child-care provider, play partners, and neighborhood parents. Check for lice on a regular basis.

10 Days to Freedom from Head Lice

Day 1

- Notify or check all exposed friends and family members.
- Treat only those who are infested with live lice or have evidence of nits laid ¼ inch from the scalp.
- Wash all bedding, clothing, and toys in hot water (130°F) and dry on high heat for 30 minutes.
- Vacuum all carpeting, furniture and car upholstery.

Day 2

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.

Day 3

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.

Day 4

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.

Day 5

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.

Day 6

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.

Day 7

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions.

Day 8

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.
- If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions.

Day 9

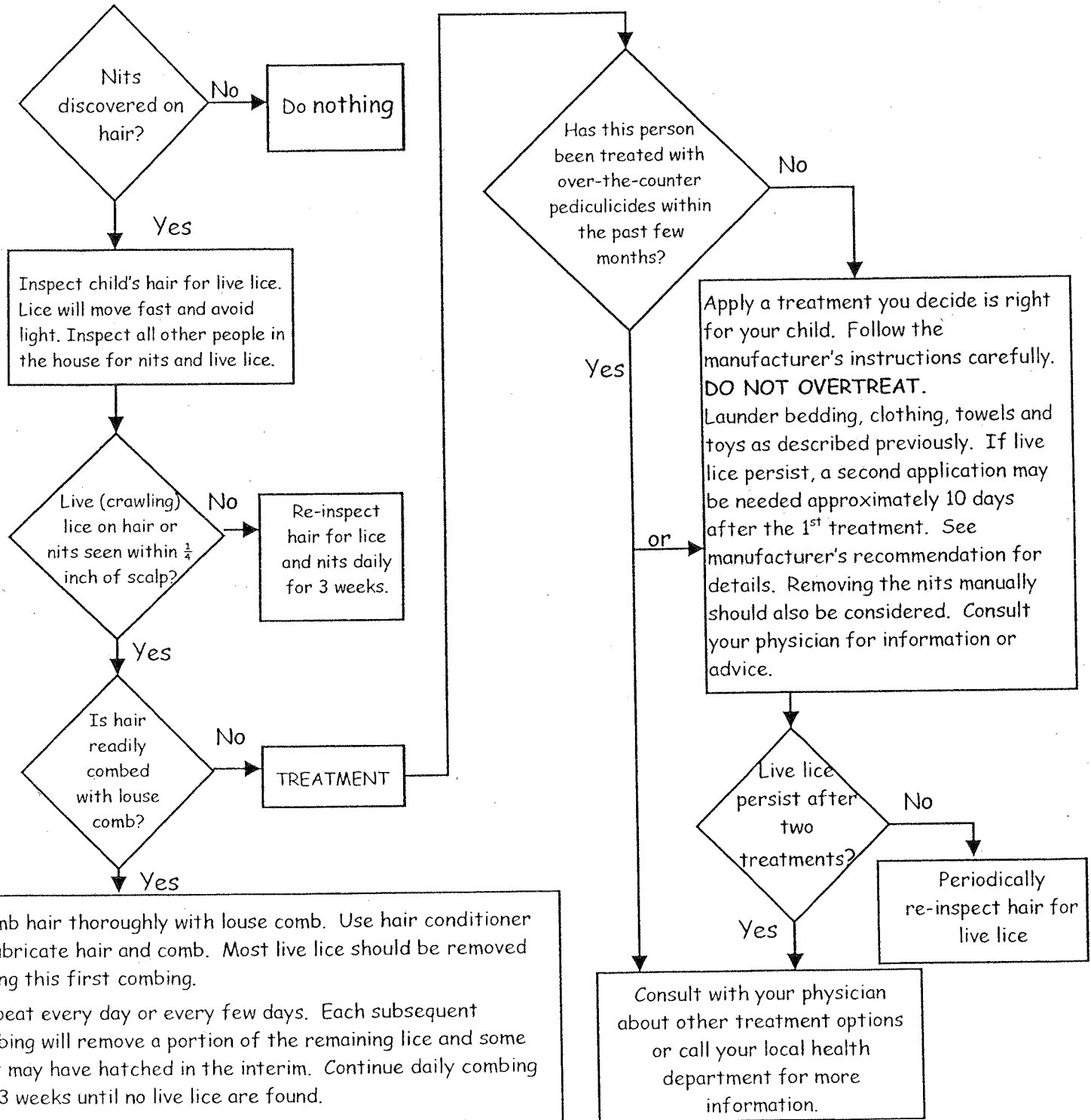
- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions.

Day 10

- Vacuum.
- Check all members of home for nits that may have been missed.
- Comb/pick nits out of hair.
- If nits or lice are still seen, repeat treatment if indicated by instructions.

**** Some lice treatments may indicate a second treatment after 7 to 10 days. Please follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully and only apply when it is suggested. This chart serves as a reminder only for days 7,8,9, and 10. ****

Parent's Flowchart for Managing Head Lice Infestations

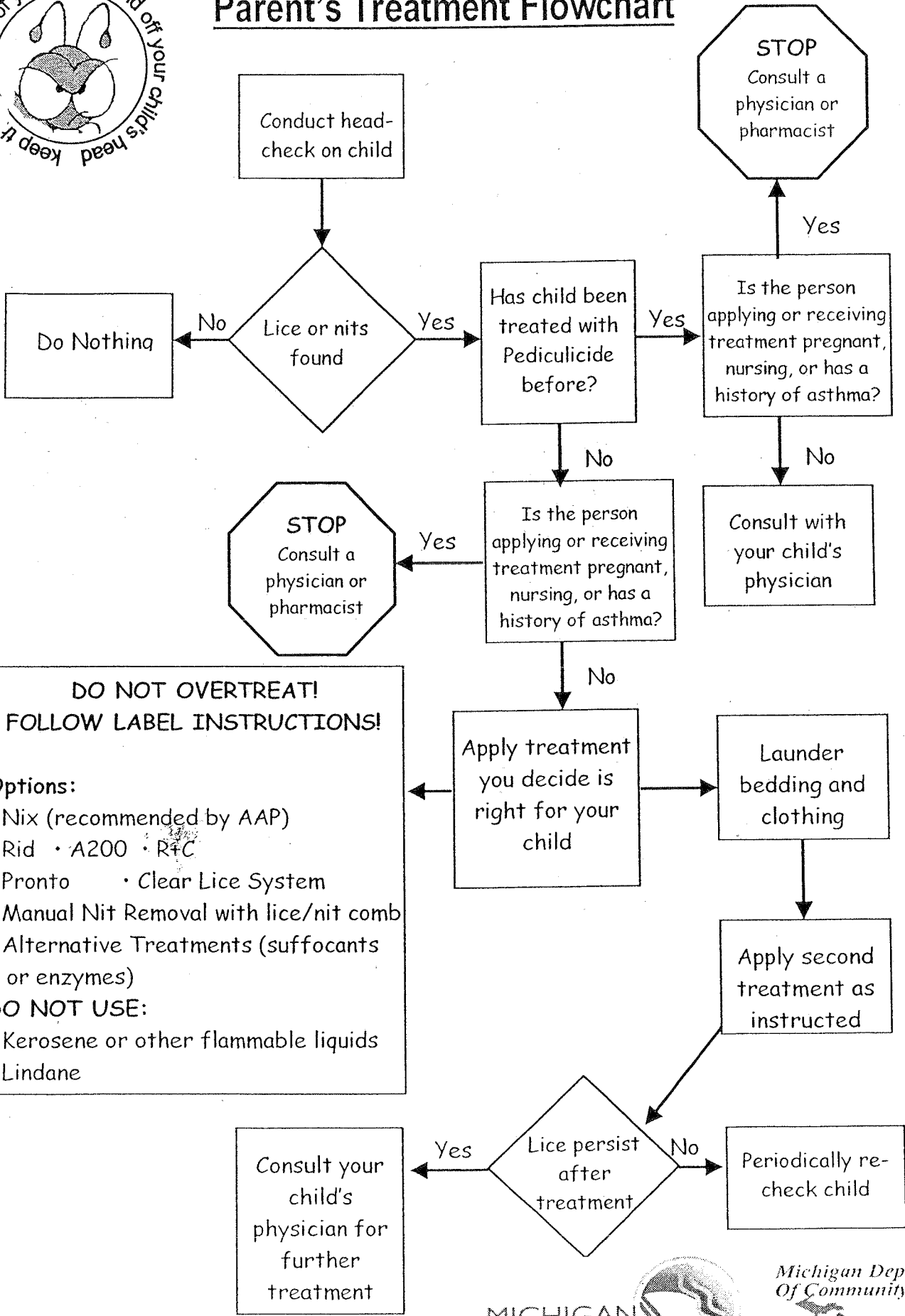


- Comb hair thoroughly with louse comb. Use hair conditioner to lubricate hair and comb. Most live lice should be removed during this first combing.
- Repeat every day or every few days. Each subsequent combing will remove a portion of the remaining lice and some that may have hatched in the interim. Continue daily combing for 3 weeks until no live lice are found.
- Other treatments may be used to supplement or replace combing.
- Removal of nits after treatment is a personal choice, as they are likely to be all dead or hatched.
- Launder bedding, clothes, towels and toys used by the child. Use water at least 130F and dry on high heat for 30 minutes.

Derived from: President and Fellows of Harvard College ©2000
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/headlice.html>



Parent's Treatment Flowchart



**DO NOT OVERTREAT!
FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS!**

Options:

- Nix (recommended by AAP)
- Rid • A200 • R+C
- Pronto • Clear Lice System
- Manual Nit Removal with lice/nit comb
- Alternative Treatments (suffocants or enzymes)

DO NOT USE:

- Kerosene or other flammable liquids
- Lindane