



Simply Green

Live Well, Tread Gently

Fall 2010 Issue: Combating Lice, The Natural Way

The SCA's Planet Manhasset presents occasional eco-tip sheets, offering easy-to-implement ideas in support of a greener and healthier lifestyle. The committee invites you to share your own green tips.

Contact us at PlanetManhasset@yahoo.com

Each parent is familiar with the dreaded letter that arrives home each year from the school's Health Office, which states, "We have found cases of head lice among the children in our school." But as most people know, the traditional over-the-counter remedies are extremely harsh for young children, and many find they are becoming increasingly ineffective. It's because lice have become immune to pesticide-based treatments. Yet, we cannot keep putting stronger and stronger treatments on children's heads! The following are some tips that can be used to combat the problem a safe and natural way!

A brief background

Head lice are small, wingless insects that feed on human blood. They live approximately 30 days on a host and a female louse may lay up to 100 nits. Nits (the egg of the head louse) are small yellowish-white, oval-shaped eggs that are glued to the side of the hair shaft. Once the nit is laid, it takes 7-10 days for the female to mature and begin laying her own eggs. Head lice are smaller than a sesame seed, and are very easy to miss. They have six legs equipped with claws to grasp the hair.

Alternative Ways Eliminate Head Lice

The most effective treatment that doesn't involve using **any** products at all simply involves removing the nits and live lice with a lice comb and/or tweezers. This is the method that is advocated by The National Pediculosis Association (a non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to protecting children from the misuse and abuse of potentially harmful lice and scabies pesticide treatments). **Comb First!** Is a program that emphasizes education and early intervention to protect children from unnecessary exposure to pesticides? In-depth information on how to remove the lice and nits along with much more background information can be found on <http://www.headlice.org>.

Kill the lice

Lice can be killed quickly, easily, cheaply and safely with mayonnaise, petroleum jelly or olive oil. Simply apply handfuls of one of these ingredients and cover all of your child's hair, making sure to get to get behind the ears and down the neck a little. You can cover this with a plastic shower cap to keep from dripping. Leave on for two hours to smother the lice and developed eggs. Then, remove the shower cap and throw it away, both of you wash your hands good with soap, and shampoo the hair thoroughly. It may take two or more shampoos to get the hair clean.

You can also make a natural lice shampoo. To a base of five teaspoons of Pure Olive Carrier Oil (or Pure Coconut Carrier Oil) add five drops of Tea Tree Essential Oil, five drops of Rosemary Oil, five drops of Lavender Oil, five drops of Peppermint Essential Oil, and five drops of Eucalyptus Essential Oil. Add a small amount of regular shampoo to the

mixture, and put this all over the hair – all the way to the edges. Leave this on for about an hour under a towel or tight-fitting shower cap to prevent drips. Rinse hair thoroughly and shampoo.

Loosen The Eggs

After shampooing, rinse the hair and scalp with vinegar. This loosens the glue that holds the nits onto the hair shafts. Rinse with hot water. Comb all of the tangles out of the hair with a regular comb; then comb the hair with a nit comb.

Check The Hair

When you think you are done, you want to use good lighting to thoroughly check the hair once it is dry. (The nits are much easier to see on dry hair). Nits are very small and are shiny at a certain angle. If you find any nits you can pull them off with your finger nails, comb them off the nit comb, or cut each hair off that contains a nit. You will need to check the hair daily for any missed nits. Every other person in the household will need to be checked – human lice do not live on animals.

Clothes, Combs, Etc.

All of the clothing that your child has worn and towels your child has used for the last week should be washed in hot water. If there is an item that will shrink in the washer you can put it through the dryer on the hot cycle for thirty minutes without washing first. All bedding (sheets, blankets, pillows, pillowcases, comforters, mattress covers), need to be washed in hot water, dried on the hot cycle, or put into a plastic bag and left sealed. (The bags should be sealed for two weeks to offer the best protection against additional eggs hatching). Bagging is also necessary for stuffed animals, hats, throw pillows, barrettes, hair ribbons, and anything else that has come in contact with your child or your child's comb and brush. Vacuum the mattress, couch, chairs, rugs and floors, car seats and car rugs thoroughly, then dispose of the vacuum bags.

Natural Lice Spray

Finally, the last area to tackle in the battle to rid your child of head lice is insuring again that all surfaces are free of the insect. There are products on the market but there is probably no need for a spray to kill lice on any of these surfaces if you vacuum thoroughly. If you feel there is a place you could not vacuum, bag, wash, or put in the dryer, you can make your own spray. Lace to Leather.com offers detailed recipes for a natural lice spray.

For more information on Planet Manhasset or any SCA committee/event, please visit www.manhassetzca.org. Questions/comments? Please e-mail: PlanetManhasset@yahoo.com

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References:

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