

# Michigan Head Lice Manual



A comprehensive guide to identify, treat,  
manage and prevent head lice



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of Community Health*



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## 5) Identification of Head Lice ---

### Suggested Equipment and Supplies:

- ✓ Applicator stick or tongue depressor
- ✓ Strong source of natural light, high intensity lamp, or strong flashlight
- ✓ Magnifying glass with a light source if possible
- ✓ Disposable gloves (optional)
- ✓ Clean/dry container with secure closure if submitting specimen to laboratory
- ✓ Scissors and forceps for collecting samples of hair
- ✓ Transparent Tape

### Methods

Head lice are best identified by inspecting the hair and scalp for live lice or nits (eggs attached to the hair shaft). The standard for identifying head lice is finding a live louse on the head. Lice and nits are most often found at the nape of the neck, and above and behind the ears. Carefully part the hair using the applicator stick or tongue depressor and examine the hair and scalp for nits or crawling lice. Begin by inspecting the nape of the neck and the area behind the ears. If nothing is seen in these areas, continue to inspect the rest of the head to ensure the absence of lice and nits.

Adults and nymphs are difficult to see because they are small and often appear to be nearly the same color as the host's hair. Most recently laid nits will be opaque, white, shiny, and located on a hair shaft within one-quarter inch of the scalp, and generally develop a dark

eyespot within 48 hours of being laid. The cap or operculum (a flap that serves as a cover of the nit case) will be intact, and an embryo may be observed by microscope. Dandruff, hair casts, globules of hair spray, and scalp conditions such as psoriasis or eczema may easily be mistaken for nits. Hair debris is easily detached or loosened from the hair shaft. Nits are firmly attached to the hair and are not easily removed. Empty nit cases are more visible and are dull yellow in color. Nits are usually found one-quarter inch or more from the scalp due to hair growth following the initial attachment. By the time the hair has grown sufficiently for the egg case to be one-half inch from the scalp, the egg has either hatched or is non-viable.

Question about identifying lice or nits should be referred to a health care professional. Live lice may be submitted to a laboratory in a clean/dry container or on a piece of transparent tape. Pieces of hair with possible nits attached may be snipped and submitted to the laboratory in the same manner. Contact the laboratory for further instructions on specimen submission.

Nits or lice in the eyelashes or eyebrows indicates possible infestation with other species of lice. Specimens should be submitted to a laboratory for full identification and the case referred to a private physician or local health department, as a different form of treatment will be required.

## 7) School Assistance ---

### Tips for Preventing Transmission

- Teach children not to share combs, brushes, hair ornaments, hats, caps, scarves, headsets or any other personal headgear.
- Do not try on other people's hats (even in department stores).
- Teach children to hang coats separately - placing hats and scarves inside coat/jacket sleeves.
- Shared headgear, (i.e., helmets) should be cleaned and disinfected with Lysol® or rubbing alcohol before being issued to other students.
- Encourage parents to check their children regularly for head lice.

### Tips for Cleaning the School Environment

- Vacuum all floors, rugs, pillows, carpet squares, and upholstered furniture. There is no need to discard the vacuum bag after cleaning except for aesthetic purposes.
- Combs and brushes used on an infested individual should be immersed in water hotter than 130°F, Lysol®, rubbing alcohol or a pediculicide for one hour.
- Play clothing, linens, smocks and cloth toys worn or handled by an infested individual within 2 days before diagnosis should be washed in water hotter than 130°F, or machine dried at the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes.
- Other articles may be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for at least 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures.
- It is **not** necessary to hire an exterminator.
- **Spraying or fogging schools with insecticides or pediculicides is NOT RECOMMENDED, and may be harmful if used in a poorly ventilated area.**

# What Can the School Do to Help Control and Prevent Head Lice?

## **Clean the School Environment:**

- ✓ Vacuum all floors, rugs, pillows, carpet squares, and upholstered furniture. There is no need to discard the vacuum bag after cleaning except for aesthetic purposes.
- ✓ Play clothing, linens, art smocks, stuffed animals, and cloth toys used by an infested child within 2 days before diagnosis should be washed in hot water, or machine dried at the highest heat setting for at least 30 minutes.
- ✓ Spraying or fogging schools with insecticides or pediculicides is **NOT RECOMMENDED**, and may be harmful if used in poorly ventilated areas.
- ✓ Shared headgear, headphones, and/or helmets should be cleaned and disinfected with Lysol® or rubbing alcohol before being used by other people.

## **To Prevent Transmission:**

- ✓ Teach children not to share or use their friends' combs, brushes, hair ornaments, hats, caps, scarves, headphones with foam protectors, coats, pillows, or any other personal headgear.
- ✓ If possible, provide separate lockers or "cubby holes" for each child's coat and clothing. Consider separate plastic bags for each child to put their personal items in before hanging on hooks if no lockers are available.
- ✓ Teach children to place their hats, mittens and scarves inside coat/jacket sleeves before hanging on hooks if coats can hang separately.
- ✓ Pets in the classroom do not need to be treated and cannot maintain or transmit lice.
- ✓ Begin head lice education within the classrooms so that children can understand head lice and what they can do to help prevent the spread of lice.

# Head Lice Screening Procedure

## Suggested equipment and supplies:

- ✓ Disposable applicator sticks or tongue depressors
- ✓ Strong source of natural light, high intensity lamp
- ✓ Magnifying glass
- ✓ Disposable gloves (optional)
- ✓ Trash can with garbage bags
- ✓ Transparent Tape
- ✓ Chair/privacy for person being screened
- ✓ Copy or knowledge of school district's head lice policy

Identification of head lice is made by direct inspection of the hair and scalp for the presence of live lice and nits. *More often than not, identification will be achieved by seeing attached nits rather than by crawling lice.* Lice and nits are most often found in the hair behind the ears and at the back of the neck.

## Things to Know:

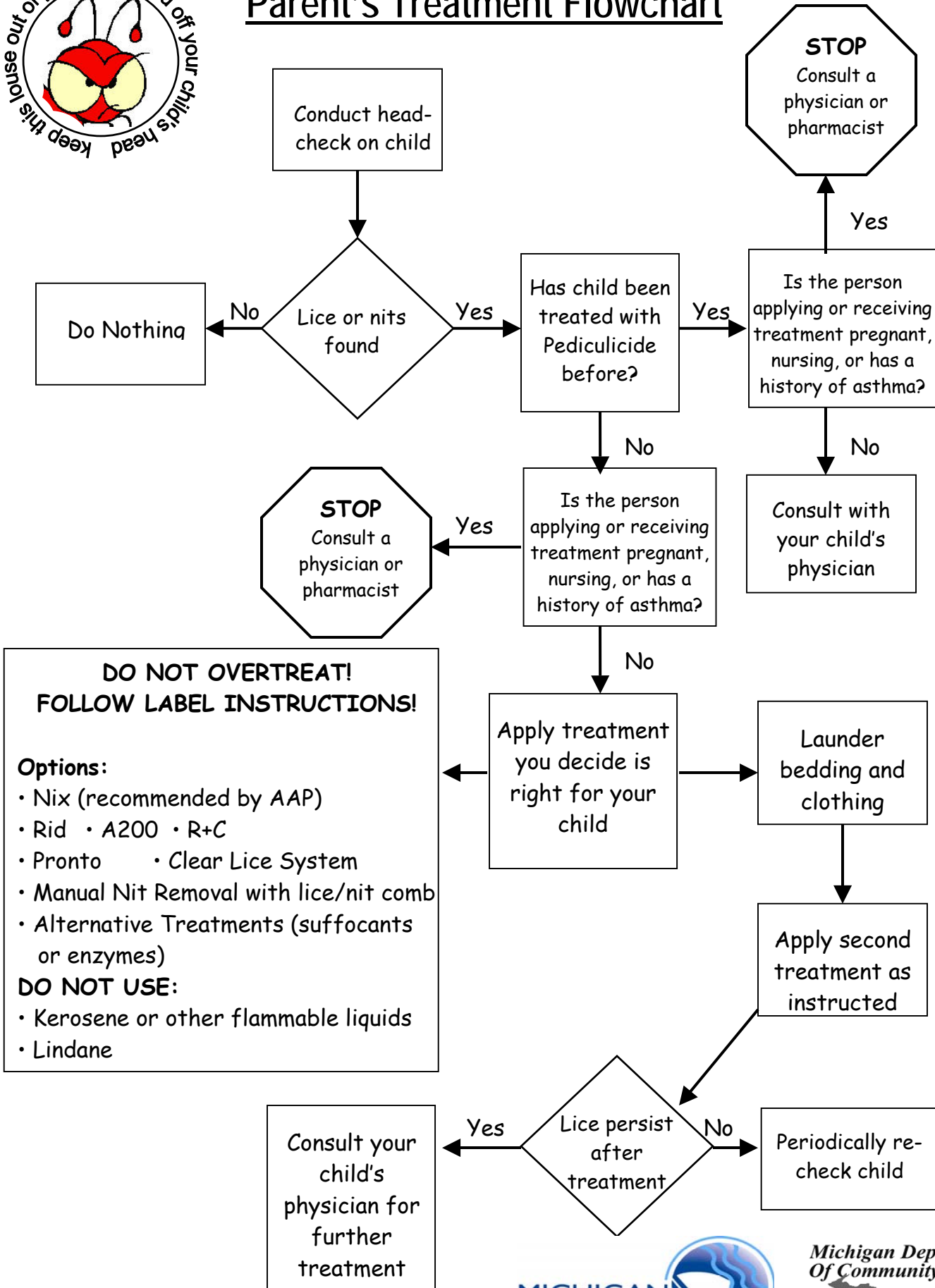
- Live lice are about the size of a sesame seed, usually brown, and move quickly away from light.
- Nits are tiny, yellowish-white oval eggs firmly attached at an angle to the hair shaft.
- Be sure not to confuse nits with hair debris such as desquamated epithelial cell (DEC) plugs (bright white irregularly shaped clumps of dandruff stuck to the hair shaft), or hair casts (elongated segments of dandruff encircling the hair shaft). Children who have been over-applied with lice treatments often have these artifacts, which may confuse identification.

## Screening Procedure:

1. Begin by separating the hair into small sections.
2. Using a natural light or high intensity lamp and magnifying glass if needed, examine the hair behind the ears, back of the neck and scalp for crawling lice or nits.
3. If no lice or nits are found in these areas, continue to inspect the rest of the head.



# Parent's Treatment Flowchart



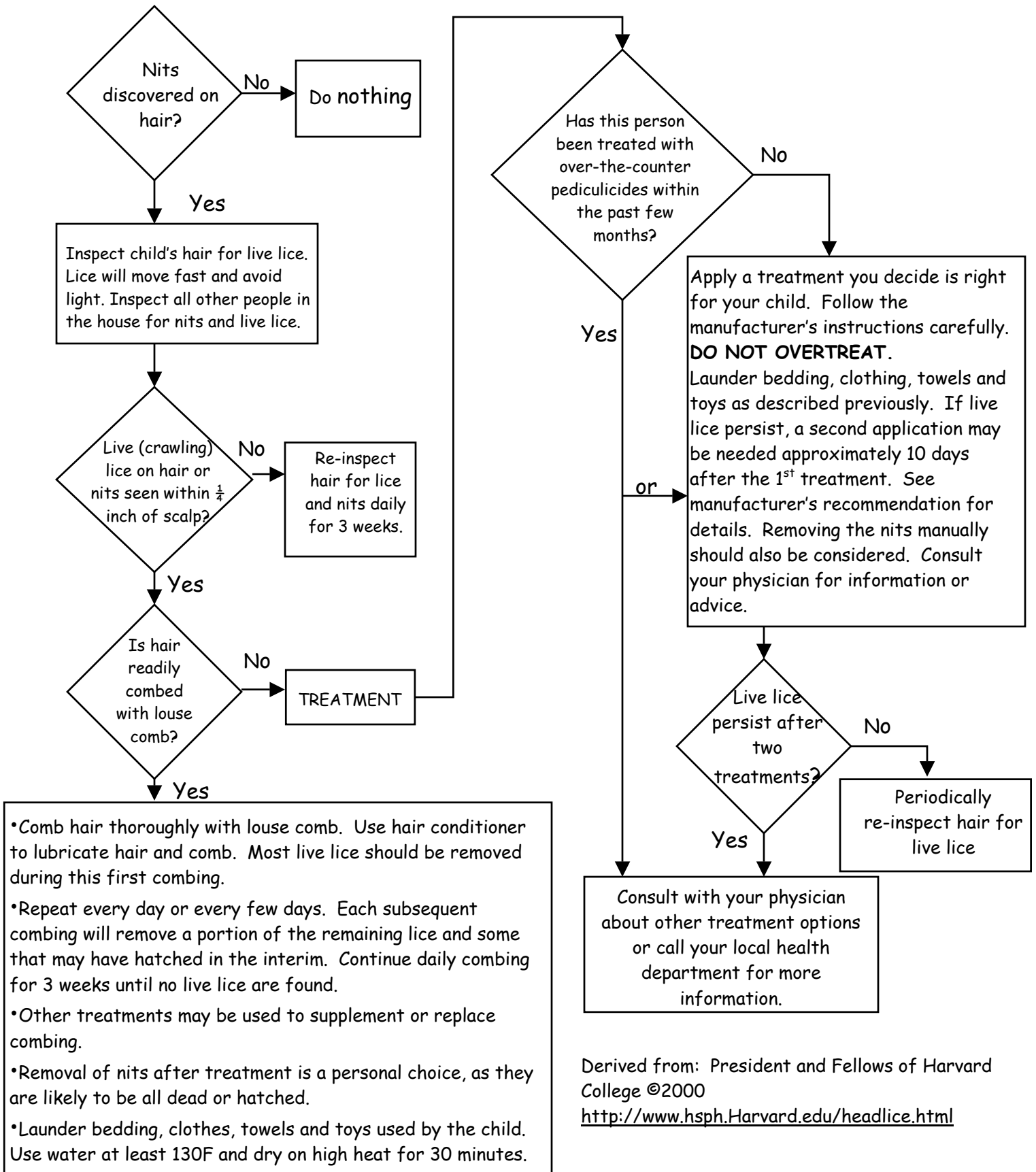
**DO NOT OVERTREAT!  
FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS!**

**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







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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. \*\***