

Advertisement:



IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

 By Blair Chavis Dec. 4, 2009 at 9:52 p.m.

While vampires might be the latest fad in Blockbuster films, some real-life bloodsuckers have had a stronghold on the public for some time. Only 2.1 to 3.3 millimeters in length, adult head lice are parasitic insects that feed on human blood several times a day, according to the Centers for Disease ... [Read more >](#)

While vampires might be the latest fad in Blockbuster films, some real-life bloodsuckers have had a stronghold on the public for some time.

Only 2.1 to 3.3 millimeters in length, adult head lice are parasitic insects that feed on human blood several times a day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site.

Hat and scarf season is a prime feeding time for head lice, according to Bill Mays, the Lake County Health Departments community health services director.

With the ability of head lice to travel from scarf to scarf and coat collar to coat collar, its more of a winter phenomenon, Mays said.

The most common way to transmit lice is through hair-to-hair contact, he added, but the sharing of hats and scarves, a secondary means, can make lice more common in cold months.

According to the CDC, an estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States among children 3 to 11 years of age, but reliable data is difficult to collect.

Similarly, Mays and a representative from the Cook County Department of Health said they dont have numbers for their individual counties because lice infestation is not reported formally particularly because lice are not known to spread disease.

Regardless, lice cause parents to panic, Mays said, and parents have misconceptions that lice are caused by poor hygiene or that only poor children get them.

Head lice can infest people in all socio-economic levels without regard for age, race, sex or standards of personal hygiene, Mays said. Its important for parents to deal with it and not look around for blame.

Northbrook business owner Lisa Weisberg said she took the critters stigma into account when choosing a location for her new hair salon, which specializes primarily in picking out lice.

The Nit Pickers, 3000 Dundee Rd., Suite 409, Northbrook, is nestled in a benign office complex, much like one might expect for a doctors office.

Lice are nothing to be embarrassed about, said Weisberg, who co-owns the salon with her husband and another Buffalo Grove-based couple.

Anyone who has blood and hair can get lice. Youre not dirty, Weisberg said. This place is a little bit more private for some people who just feel a little funny about it.

Weisberg said she got the idea for the salon after her entire family became infested.

It started with my youngest daughter and then my sons got it, my husband got it and I got, she said. Its extremely overwhelming.

The CDC recommends that parents not only remove all lice from childrens heads through combing, shampoos or topical treatments; but also that any infested clothing, hair utensils, towels, bed linens, furniture, carpet and stuffed animals be washed, scrubbed, vacuumed or sealed off. Go to www.cdc.gov for more information.

Its like waging war, said Lake Forest mom Sharon Epstein, who brought her two children, Julia and Quinn, into the salon. Everywhere you go they could be on anything.

Epstein said she originally tried to fight the war on her own with an over-the-counter shampoo, but it didnt wash away the problem. Not to mention, she said she was worried because the product contained toxins.

They have all those pesticides in [them], Epstein said. You read them and they say, dont inhale, dont do this If theyre not allowed to put it on our food products anymore, why am I putting it in my hair and on my children?

Weisberg uses pesticide-free remedies. For a fee of \$45, she will do an initial head check, and if lice are spotted, the total fee is \$90 for the first hour, with additional billing based on quarter-hour increments. Usually, it takes about three sessions, she said.

First, we go through them and we see if theres any evidence of having nits or bugs, Weisberg said. If we find either nits or bugs, then we take the head check into a treatment, which then becomes [a process with] our mousse product and our terminator comb. We go through every section of the hair to pull out anything and then once the hair is dry, we go through it again, section by section.

Weisberg said she also does house calls.

For more information about The NIt Pickers, go to www.thenitpickers.com.

By Blair Chavis/Triblocal.com reporter

Triblocal.com photos by Blair Chavis