

HEALTH

MOMS
CONNECTDealing with head lice in your home? Join the discussion at www.jerseyshore.momslikeme.com to talk about what works — and what doesn't.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BOB BIELK

Shana Weiner, a "lice consultant" from Lakewood, demonstrates how she rids clients of head lice. Her natural method involves placing conditioner on the hair, manually removing each egg with a fine-tooth comb, rinsing then drying the hair, then checking again. The process takes less than an hour.

'The facts of lice'

Taking a simple approach to treatment

By **SUSAN BLOOM**
CORRESPONDENT

Parents often are too ashamed to talk about it, those two evil words they fear will label them or their children as dirty people living in an unclean home: head lice.

"Sadly, the shame and fear of being exposed is part of the reason why lice are so prevalent," Lakewood-based "lice consultant" Shana Weiner revealed.

"Lice are most often passed around by preschool and elementary school-aged children who play right next to each other, share each other's clothing and toys, or who interact in close quarters like school, camp and after-school activities," she said. "Parents should tell school authorities or other parents if their child has lice because otherwise, it will just keep getting passed around to other kids and their families."

Though not a new condition by any means, the presence of pediculosis capitis, or head lice, still appears shrouded in shame after all this time. In interviews, local parents whose children had been successfully treated for lice refused to share their last names, their children's names or their towns.

"But the truth is that anyone can get lice, and it's not a reflection on their personal hygiene or the cleanliness of their home," Weiner said, a fact confirmed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "In fact," she said, "lice actually prefer clean scalps to dirty ones or ones that contain a lot of hair products."

According to Weiner, head lice are parasitic, wingless insects that live on the scalp and feed on their host's blood. They don't jump, but rather crawl from person to person directly or through soft conduits such as bedding, clothing, carpet, couches, towels and stuffed animals until they make their way to the hair and head. An adult, called a louse, is about the size of a sesame seed and can lay three to 10 eggs on a scalp per day.

The eggs, called nits, are smaller and take seven to 10 days to hatch; once they hatch, they become adult lice that can begin laying eggs in another seven to 10 days.

"Things could start out with just one louse, but after a month, you could potentially have 20 adult bugs and hundreds of nits in your hair," Weiner shared. "It just gets exponentially worse and worse if left untreated."

The presence of lice can be detected by sight or the itchy reaction they can cause on the scalp.

Though only 24 years old, Weiner has spent half of her life debunking people's misconceptions about head lice and assisting children and their families to rid themselves of the



A magnified image of head lice and a nit, or egg.

"The bottom line is that people shouldn't be ashamed, and they shouldn't panic. Lice aren't a big deal, and they're easy to get rid of if done correctly."

— Shana Weiner, a Lakewood resident who works with parents to treat lice outbreaks in their children.

For more information on head lice or to contact Shana Weiner, call 732-886-5423 or visit www.liceconsultant.com.

parasite. A registered physician assistant, Weiner learned the ropes of lice removal from her Brooklyn-based mother, Abigail Rosenfeld, who has been successfully treating lice outbreaks and calming concerned parents for more than 25 years and who has affectionately been coined "The Lice Lady" in numerous print and broadcast outlets based on her expertise and kind, effective approach.

There are numerous over-the-counter and prescription products on the market used to treat head lice, but in contrast to many of these, Weiner explained, she and her mother's method "is a natural one. After placing conditioner on the hair, we manually remove every single nit with a special fine-tooth German-made Nisska comb, combing from bottom to top several times. Then we rinse out the hair, dry it and check it again. The whole process takes less than an hour, and we'll have the patient back a week later for another checkup just to confirm that we got everything."

"There's really no way to prevent a lice outbreak," Weiner noted, "but this method is extremely successful in treating the situation. It's simple

and it doesn't involve toxic chemicals that could be harmful to a child's or adult's health, a fact which has been very comforting to parents we've worked with."

As a final preventative measure at the end of a visit, Weiner provides parents with their own comb, instructions on how to use it and a list of things in the home that should be cleaned to help prevent re-infestation. She confirms that "washing and drying things in a regular cycle is fine because the bugs won't survive in a washing machine for 40 minutes."

While it's not clear that lice outbreaks are any worse or more prevalent than they were generations ago, Weiner believes that she's dealing with an increasing flow of patients because schools are more on top of the situation than ever before out of an obligation to the welfare of their student body.

"Most schools today have a no-nit policy and perform checks on students' hair multiple times a year. A nurse or school administrator will either contact me or request that a parent contact me in the event of a problem," Weiner said.

In addition to treating patients and speaking about "the facts of lice" at area schools, perhaps the most valued service that Weiner provides is a cool, calm, collectedness in the presence of a frightened, misinformed public. "The bottom line is that people shouldn't be ashamed, and they shouldn't panic," she concluded. "Lice aren't a big deal, and they're easy to get rid of if done correctly."

Frozen fish oil doesn't taste fishy

Q. Someone wrote you to complain that fish oil makes him vomit. I take 1,200 mg of fish oil daily. My young, savvy doctor told me to keep the capsules in the freezer to prevent after-taste. That might help prevent his nausea.

A. Although we could find no scientific support for freezing fish oil to reduce the objectionable aftertaste, many people have found this tactic helpful. We don't know whether it would work for someone who cannot tolerate fish oil.

Q. My boyfriend and I both wanted to quit smoking, so we asked for a prescription for Chantix about a month ago. The first week was fine, but then things got nasty.

One night, I got upset and tried to kill myself. This is not like me, since I have two young kids. My mother committed suicide, and I never want to do that to them. My boyfriend restrained me, but it took a while for me to calm down.

I was still quite moody, and a few nights later I tried to kill myself again. At that point, my boyfriend bashed my head into the concrete floor, which is totally unlike him.

He stopped taking Chantix after that and soon returned to the loving, caring man that he is. I continued to take the drug and feel suicidal.

Tonight, I looked online to find out more about this drug and found lots of stories from others who have had trouble with violent or suicidal feelings. Doctors really need to warn patients about this.

A. Doctors must caution patients about the side effects of this stop-smoking medicine. You should have been warned about symptoms such as agitation, hostility, depression or thoughts of suicide. If such symptoms arise, the drug should be stopped and the doctor contacted immediately.

Q. About three years ago, I had radiation treatment

PEOPLE'S PHARMACY



By
Joe Graedon &
Teresa Graedon

for a nodule on my thyroid. Without a functioning thyroid gland, I must take levothyroxine. The doctors still can't seem to get the dose of Synthroid right so that my TSH level will be steady.

As a result, my TSH lab values are either very low or very high, and I feel terrible. I have tried taking my Synthroid at night as well as in the morning, but nothing is helping. I hope you can send me your guide with more information.

A. TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone) is the standard doctors use to evaluate thyroid status. Since your level varies so much, you may want to discuss some other thyroid medications with your doctor.

One reader sent this report: "Taking Synthroid was making me miserable. I read about Erfa desiccated thyroid in your column and got a prescription. I sent away to a pharmacy in Canada to get it.

"Within a few weeks, I felt much better, and in three months, my lab tests showed definite improvement. My doctor did NOT believe it, but I am grateful."

Q. My dog had major surgery, and my veterinarian is applying granulated sugar on the incision. I'm very impressed with the results.

A. This is a very old-fashioned approach to wound healing. It is inexpensive and may be surprisingly effective (Journal of Diabetes Science and Technology, September 2010).

Write to the Graedons in care of this newspaper or e-mail them via their website, www.PeoplesPharmacy.com.

HEALTH EVENTS

PROGRAMS AT CENTRASTATE

FREEHOLD TOWNSHIP — CentraState Healthcare System's Health Awareness Center is offering the following programs next month:

■ First Aid for Family and Friends — from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Feb. 1 at CentraState's Star and Barry Tobias Ambulatory Campus, 901 W. Main St. This program teaches how to manage illness and injuries in a child for the first few minutes until professional help arrives. It will cover topics such as preventing injuries, and recognizing and treating basic first aid emergencies. This is a noncertification training course, and no test is required. The cost is \$30 and includes a textbook.

■ Women's heart health event — from 9 a.m. to noon Feb. 1 at the Star and Barry Tobias Ambulatory Campus. The fair will include the following free physician lectures: cardiac health, congestive heart failure; signs, symptoms and treatment for stroke, peripheral vascular disease, integrated health and cardiology. A cardiovascular/stroke risk assessment screening will be available for \$30.

■ The Leukemia and Lymphoma, Multiple Myeloma and Myelodysplastic Syndromes Support Group — 7 p.m. Feb. 2 at CentraState Medical Center, 901 W. Main St., administration conference room. This is a monthly support group for patients and their family

members to provide education, psychosocial support and resources. For more information, call 888-920-8557, ext. 208.

■ Fibromyalgia Support Group — from 11 a.m. to noon Feb. 3 at the Star and Barry Tobias center. This is a support group that assists members to move through their challenges with encouragement, free expression and group guidance to achieve the best quality of life with few restrictions and limitations.

■ Childbirth Lamaze — from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Feb. 5 at the Star and Barry Tobias center. Learn comfort measures for labor and birth, and a First Impressions maternity tour will be offered. A one-hour lunch break will be included, and attendees should wear comfortable clothing and bring two pillows and a large blanket. The cost is \$130.

■ Breast-feeding — from noon to 3 p.m. Feb. 6 at the Star and Barry Tobias center. The cost is \$45 per couple.

Unless otherwise noted, for more information or to register, call 732-308-0570.

LEARN ABOUT WEIGHT-LOSS SURGERY

LAKEWOOD — Kimball Medical Center's Center for Healthy Living, 198 Prospect Ave., will host "Understanding Weight Loss Surgery," a free seminar, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Jan. 13.

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