



Pediatrics: Lice

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All parents know the fear of receiving a note from the school nurse announcing the first case of head lice once school has begun in September. Head lice infestations occur most commonly in school children who contract it from head to head contact in school and while playing. It is estimated that 6 to 12 million infections occur each year in the United States in children 3 to 11 years of age.

There are several treatments for head lice but many parents are concerned about the safety of these medications, particularly when used in young children. The standard medication used to kill head lice, called permethrin, works by paralyzing and killing lice and their eggs. Additionally, increasing resistance to currently available medications is a growing concern among health care providers. Parents, caregivers, and physicians are seeking safer and effective alternatives to treat head lice.

Mineral oil had been demonstrated to kill head lice and, in addition, it has less risk for development of resistance because of its mode of action. A new study from Germany has examined the ability of a mineral oil shampoo to safely and effectively kill head lice.

The mineral oil shampoo was compared to a pyrethroid-based medication that kill lice. Over one hundred patients received two applications of either the test or control product at day 0 and day 7. Efficacy and safety was evaluated at multiple times ranging from 1h after first application to day 10 after the second treatment.

Cure rates at day 10 were over 95% for the mineral oil shampoo and were better than the results achieved by the control pyrethroid-based medication. Furthermore, the product was determined to be safe and well tolerated. Although this product was tested in Germany, look for a similar product to come to the United States in the coming years.