

Q&A with Wayne lice expert Risa Barash

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BY KARA YORIO

STAFF WRITER

Risa Barash of Wayne is the co-owner of Fairy Tales natural hair care products that help prevent or kill head lice using organic herbs of rosemary, tea tree, peppermint, lavender and geranium oils. With kids going back to school soon, Barash shares her expertise and advice on how to handle and prevent a lice outbreak in your home.



Q. Where do lice come from?

Another kid's head. Nobody knows where they came from [originally].

Q. How do they spread?

They are spread through head-to-head contact. They do not jump. They don't fly. They don't hop or skip. They walk from head-to-head. [Or head-to-brush-to-head, or head-to-headband-to-head etc.] That's why we always tell our parents to explain to your children not to share. If you're combing your hair and a friend uses your brush, that's how they transfer.

Q. What should kids not share other than brushes and combs?

Baseball helmets, caps, even a scarf. One can be on somebody's scarf and the other kid puts on that scarf and it walks up to that kid's head.

Q. How long do they live off the head?

24 to 36 hours maximum.

Q. Is there a time of year or season lice is more prevalent?

Back-to-school is definitely the busiest time. Children are away, [then] they all congregate back at school. That's how the lice outbreaks start and go around and around. We also see a spike after the holidays. ... Sleep-away camp is another spike.

Once it starts, if you don't catch it right away, you're going to have an outbreak. Whenever there are a lot of kids in one spot, that's when you're going to get an outbreak. It's not so much the time of the year, it's the circumstances.

Q. What are the signs?

Usually you'll see your kid scratching his head. That's because the bugs are biting. By the time you see your child scratching his head, you have a full-blown lice outbreak. Nine out of 10 people don't realize their kid has lice until it's a full-blown live bugs in the kid's hair.

Q. What can you do to prevent it?

Do a weekly head check. It is the smartest thing you can do. You'll nip it in the bud. You want to check the hot spots every week — behind the ears, the back of the neck and the part line. Those are the spots where the lice like to lay their eggs.

Your child showers and you sit your kid down maybe on a Sunday night and spend 10 minutes going through small sections of hair with a good metal comb and looking in those spots and you're looking for the nits. They are very, very, very tiny. They can be the size of a pencil point. They are hard to find and they're literally attached to one hair shaft.

If you don't do this, you will find out the hard way that you have a lot of lice instead of maybe one and a lot of eggs.

Q. Other than checks, what preventive measures can be taken if someone at school has it?

With little girls, you want to keep their hair up. Lice like clean hair, so we tell our moms, don't wash their hair every day. If the hair has natural oils on it or [a hair] product, the bug has a hard time attaching. Their claws are very tiny. If that hair shaft is bulked up, they can't really attach to it. Studies have shown that they don't like the smell of herbs like rosemary, peppermint, tea tree, citronella.

Q. A child gets lice, now what?

Have a glass of wine.

Q. Burn the furniture?

Don't forget they don't live for more than 24 [to 36] hours, so if you vacuum the furniture, vacuum the carpet and wash the bedding in hot water once, you're going to get rid of them. I always tell people, please don't panic. I get it, but you

don't need to panic.

Q. What should parents do for the child?

There are natural products out there. We're all smarter moms than we were a long time ago. We're not putting chemicals on our kids anymore. Get an enzymatic product. You don't need to use a chemical. You don't need to use pesticides. You want to find something that takes care of the lice and the eggs.

Q. You don't need to cut the hair?

No, they live at the top of the head. That's a big thing. Don't do that to your kid. A bug will lay their eggs 1/4 of an inch down the hair shaft. That's it. So unless you're going to shave your kids head, it's useless.

Q. What about pets?

Pets don't get them.

Q. Should adults with kids use the preventive hair products too?

Yes.

Q. What else do people need to know?

Don't panic when it happens.

Definitely vacuum around the house. Even the car seats for the little ones. Some parents forget that.

Let other people know. It's not the worst thing in the world. If your daughter was at a party and you found out the next day that she has lice, let the other mothers know because there is another child there who has it.

If you talk about it and don't make it such a shameful thing, our kids won't take it so personally and then the outbreaks don't get that bad. Tell the school nurse. Tell the other moms. Just stop being ashamed by it. Your kid got it from somebody else. It's nothing you did wrong.

<http://www.northjersey.com/news/education/rule-no-1-for-dealing-with-head-lice-don-t-panic-1.1068350?page=all>