"Mommy, I think I have lice!"

Yep. That’s what my 6-year-old daughter said to me as she got into bed on December 23, 2004. Looking in her hair, I had no idea what I was looking for. I had never seen a louse in my life! I saw something odd, though. They looked like poppy seeds attached to the hair. As I lay in bed that night I thought, “You have GOT to be kidding me! It’s Christmas!”

So, bright and early Christmas Eve morning, I was on the phone to her pediatrician. It is not easy to get a nurse on the day before Christmas. She confirmed my fears that we were in fact dealing with a head of lice the day before Christmas. I went to the store, looking for the recommended shampoo, and I got home 3 hours before we had to be at church, and started her first treatment.

Four months pregnant, I donned the plastic gloves (that stuff is toxic, you know), and started washing the shampoo into her hair. After that, I brushed, brushed, brushed, and brushed through her thick hair with that little tiny comb. For two hours, I combed her hair.

Have you ever tried to keep a child still the day before Christmas?

For two weeks, we did the same combing routine, twice a day, sitting on a sheet so we did not spread the lice, until they were almost gone. The last shampoo on day 14 would do it, and my daughter would be able to return to school when vacation was over.

Then the guilt set in. Those shampoos are insecticides! I put insecticide on my daughter’s head, and let it sit there for an hour, washing it out, but knowing there was still residue in her hair. The stories and questions of “Are those shampoos really safe?”

If I had to do it over, I would never put that on my child’s head again, and would have to resort to combing and natural remedies, like mayonnaise (which we also did).

There may be a new treatment on the horizon, though: The LouseBuster.

Sounds a bit like something out of Saturday Night Live, but it’s not. It’s a hair dryer device that blows away lice in as little as 30 minutes!

The dry air of this device kills the eggs and lice by drying them out. In studies, it has been found that lice need humidity to survive, and this eliminates that, killing them. According to biologist Dale Clayton, co-inventor:

"The idea would be that instead of sending kids home from school, which is a hardship on kids"
Imagine how much easier that would be on everyone involved.

That is all I wanted for Christmas that year.

Posted by Mally.

Entry Filed under: Science and Technology, Children's Health

5 Comments Add your own

1. meganlux | November 7th, 2006 at 8:37 am

Interesting. I am dealing with lice now - my 10 year old has his second bout last week (in the past month…probably didn’t get rid of it all the first time). One thing to note - the combs don’t work…those eggs stick like crazy. The nurse at his school told me the best thing is to pick them out with my fingers (yup, like the monkeys in the zoo LOL). I found it easiest when his hair is wet, dry hair is too frizzy and i could not see the eggs so well - I parted it section my section and picked out the eggs with my fingernails. Over in Europe, we have a silicone shampoo that smothers them - kind of like the mayonaise does. Gross, but call it motherly love…

2. Mally | November 7th, 2006 at 10:08 am

The plastic combs don’t work, but the metal ones do. They look like flea combs 😛 Wet hair actually immobilizes the little buggers so they aren’t moving when you are trying to get them out, so it’s important to wet the hair. I used vinegar and water in a spray bottle, started from the top/front and worked my way down and to the back, clipping back sections as I went. I also used my fingers. That is where the saying “nit picking” comes from. Picking out the little nits 😛 (just a little factoid I learned during my lice escapade). They are a pain in the tushy to get rid of. Also, wash bedding (obviously) in HOT water, bag stuffed animals and such for at least 3 weeks, and vacuum.

3. lollypop_71 | November 7th, 2006 at 11:06 am

what’s the worst is getting sent home everytime because you have a scalp condition- not unlike cradle cap- and getting made fun of for being dirty from always having lice…. poor kids inherited that skin condition too…

I think this might take a lot of the stigma out of headlice…saw it on the news last night and it looks like a great idea.

4. mommasteph | November 7th, 2006 at 11:47 am

I just love that these folks saw a problem and came up with a new ingenious solution. Terrific. I hope it works!
I just shaved my DS head. I’m guessing my DD wouldn’t go for that.