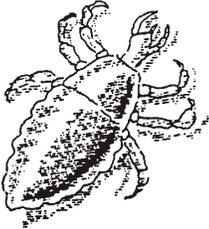


# HEAD LICE: Information for parents

If your child has head lice, don't panic or feel embarrassed. Having head lice is not a sign of poor hygiene. Lice can be a problem for kids of all ages and socioeconomic levels, no matter how often they do - or don't - clean their hair or bathe.

## WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?



Head lice are tiny, wingless insects (about as big as a sesame seed) that may live on the human scalp and survive on human blood. The eggs, called nits, are extremely tiny and are usually found attached to hair shafts close to the scalp behind the ears and on the back of the head. Nits hatch within 1-2 weeks after they're laid, and become adult lice about 7 days after they hatch. Most lice feed on blood about every 4 to 6 hours, but they can survive up to 3 days off the scalp. Nits cannot be washed away like dirt or dandruff: they must be removed with a special comb designed for that purpose.

## HOW DO THEY SPREAD?



While head lice cannot fly or jump from person to person, they have specially adapted claws that allow them to crawl and cling firmly to hair. They spread mainly through head-to-head contact, but sharing clothing, bed linens, combs, brushes, and hats can also help pass them along. Children and teens are most prone to catching lice because they tend to have close physical contact with each other and often share personal items. Pets can't catch head lice and pass them on to people or the other way around.

## HOW ARE THEY DETECTED?



The first clue that a child has head lice is frequent scratching of the scalp. To check for infestation, carefully examine the hair around the back of the neck and behind the ears. Since head lice shy away from light, you may only see the nits, tiny yellowish or grayish white tear-shaped eggs attached to the hair shaft.

## HOW ARE THEY TREATED?



Your doctor can recommend a prescription or over-the-counter medicated shampoo, cream, or lotion to kill the lice. It isn't uncommon for treatments to be unsuccessful because of incorrect use or because the lice may be resistant to the chemical in the shampoo. Follow the directions exactly because these products are insecticides. If your child is 2 years old or under, contact your health care provider **before** you use a medicated lice treatment - you may need to remove the nits and lice by hand.

Lice can survive for up to 3 days off the human scalp on personal items and household surfaces, clothing or bed linen. Properly clean all washable items or place all non-washable items in a tightly sealed plastic bag for 14 days before reusing to avoid a re-infestation.

To learn more, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html> or call us at:

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