

Keeping Your Child Lice Free

Teach your child not to share brushes, combs, hair clips, headbands, headphones or hats.

Encourage them to use only their own pillows, blankets, etc. especially at sleepovers.

Educate your children about lice transmission and encourage them to avoid head-to-head contact when playing with friends.

Always check your child's head before and after a camping trip or sleepover.

Check your child's hair if you notice they are scratching their head.

Screen all family members for head lice on a regular basis. The sooner the lice are found the easier it is to get rid of them.



Enlarged view

Did You Know?

Head lice are not a sign of uncleanness; they love clean hair because it is easier to latch on to.

Head lice are a nuisance, but they do not spread disease.

Removing the nits (eggs) and live lice with a special metal-tooth comb is time-consuming but the most effective way to get rid of them.

Because of the overuse of lice shampoos, head lice have become resistant to these products so they are not 100 % effective. This is why combing and nit removal is so important.

Much of the information about lice treatment found on the internet is misinformation and is simply there to try and sell you a product. Be sure your information is from a reputable source.

School-wide head checks are not recommended or endorsed by the Harvard School of Public Health, the American Academy of Pediatrics or the Centers for Disease Control. The most effective screening occurs when parents check their own children at home.

Questions?

If you have questions about the prevention or treatment of head lice, don't hesitate to contact the nurse at the school your child attends.

A Parent's Guide to Head Lice

Head Lice Facts

Head lice are small wingless insects that live in people's hair and feed on their blood. They are about 1/16 to 1/8 inch in length (the size of a sesame seed) and vary in color from tan to grey/white.

Lice glue their eggs or "nits" to individual hair shafts near the scalp. They are often found behind the ears and across the back of the neck.

Lice do not jump or fly, but they do crawl quickly. Head lice die quickly without feeding so they cannot live more than a couple days away from someone's head.

Eggs (nits) take six to nine days to hatch and seven or more days to become egg-laying adults.

Children are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school. Head-to-head contact is the most common way lice are spread.

An itchy scalp is the most common symptom of having head lice.

Steps For Getting Rid of Head Lice

Look

Look closely at the base of the hair and scalp around the ears and across the back of the neck. These are common areas to find nits. Nits are small white to brown oval shaped eggs that are glued to the base of the hair shaft. Check the rest of the head as well.

Treat

If you desire, you may use an over-the-counter lice killing shampoo for anyone who has live lice. Be sure to closely follow the instructions included with the treatment. Using more treatment, keeping it on the hair longer, or reapplying sooner than recommended will not make it more effective and could increase the risk of side effects. These products will not kill all the lice and nits and should not be used as a substitute for combing.

Comb and Pick

Comb the hair with a quality, metal nit comb. Try to remove all nits and lice that you find. Use the lice comb daily for two weeks. Use your fingernails to pick out any nits missed by the comb. This process takes the most time, energy, and patience but it is the most important step. (See "Manual Removal of Nits and Lice")

Clean

Clean your house using normal methods, such as washing clothes, towels and bedding and vacuuming floors, furniture and car seats. Dry bedding on high heat to kill any stray lice or nits. Stuffed animals should be removed from the bed until no lice or nits are found in hair.

Lice sprays for furniture have not been shown to be effective and can be dangerous to your health.

Repeat

Many lice shampoos recommend a second treatment in 7-10 days. If you choose to repeat the treatment, be sure to follow the directions just as you did for the first treatment.

To prevent reoccurrence of head lice, thoroughly comb through hair with a quality nit comb each day for 14 days. If you find nits or live lice after 14 days, then continue to use the comb and contact your school nurse.



Quality Nit Comb

Manual Removal of Nits and Lice

- 1) Work in a well-lighted area.
- 2) Use a hairbrush to remove all tangles
- 3) Divide the hair into sections and use clips to fasten off the hair that is not being worked on.
- 4) Use a nit comb to help detect and remove all nits and lice. Quality nit combs have long metal teeth. You can find nit combs sold at your local pharmacy.
- 5) Thoroughly go through each hair section from scalp to end of hair. Nits are usually found close to the scalp. It may be necessary to use your fingernails to pick out any nits missed by the comb.
- 6) After completely combing through one section of hair, move on to the next section until all hair has been combed through. Pay particular attention to hair behind ears and across back of neck.
- 7) An entertaining TV show or video may help keep your child occupied during this process.
- 8) Repeat this process every day for 14 days.
- 9) If additional nits are found after 14 days, continue daily combing until no nits are found for several days.