



Communicable Diseases PEDICULOSIS (HEAD LICE)

What are Head Lice?

Head lice are small insects that live on the scalp of humans. They prefer to live on the scalp along the neckline and behind the ears. When lice bite the scalp they cause tickling or itching.



Head lice are very small – about the size of a sesame seed and are hard to see because they move so quickly. Lice lay eggs called 'nits'. Nits are small, white and oval. Lice lay the nits on the hair close to the scalp, attached with a cement-like substance and cannot be washed out or flicked off.



Head lice are not a health hazard or sign of poor hygiene and do not spread

disease. They are a nuisance and cause a high level of anxiety.

How do you get Head Lice?

Anyone can get head lice.

Uncleanliness does **not** cause head lice. Head lice cannot jump or fly. They are frequently found in school classrooms and day care centers because of the closeness of children and their belongings.

You get lice by having close head to head contact with someone who has head lice. Contact with personal items belonging to an infested person (combs, brushes, hats, etc.) rarely spreads the lice.

How do you know if you have Head Lice?

Determining that a person has head lice requires the detection of live head lice. The presence of nits indicates a past infestation that may not currently be active. If your child scratches his or her head or if you hear that one of your child's friends or classmates has head lice, you should check for live lice on your child's scalp. **Treat only when live lice are detected.**

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Should children with Head Lice stay home?

Head lice in classrooms doesn't spread as much as previously thought. A child with active head lice should remain in school, but be discouraged from close direct head contact with others and sharing hats.

What is the best way to find Head Lice?

1. Apply conditioner to hair to soak from the scalp to the end of the hair.
2. Remove tangles with a comb.
3. Start behind the ears and comb the hair section by section with a fine tooth lice comb. Separating the hair with hair clips is helpful.
4. Place the lice comb against the scalp and pull to the end of the hair.
5. Check the comb for lice after each pull, wipe the comb with a tissue each time and look for lice as well. Put tissues in a bag.

Or

6. Pull off individual nits by grasping nits between the fingertips and sliding off the end of hair strand.
7. Place in bag and dispose.
8. Check all hair on the head.
9. Repeat combing of entire head at least 5 times.
10. When finished, tie the bag with tissues and throw into the garbage.
11. If treatment is required, make sure all conditioner is washed out of the hair first.

How do you treat Head Lice?

Anyone with live **lice** should receive treatment. Recommended treatment is with a topical insecticide or other product that kills the lice. It is very important to read and follow the instructions carefully.

Most products are not effective against nits (eggs) and they will continue to hatch. A second treatment is required 7 days after the first to kill the newly hatched lice before they lay eggs. If live lice are found 24-48 hours after the first treatment, the treatment didn't work and a new product should be used.

What household cleaning is recommended?

Cleaning of items in contact with the head may be helpful (hats, pillowcases, brushes and combs). Head lice and nits cannot survive for long away from a person.

- Wash the item in hot water, drying in a hot drier for 15 minutes, or
- Store in a plastic bag for 2 weeks or in the freezer for 24 hours

NOTE:

- Using vinegar on hair does not kill lice.**
- Using kerosene on hair isn't safe and is not recommended.**
- Shaving the head to get rid of lice is not necessary.**