

Cleaning of Personal Items and Environment

Head lice are spread most commonly by direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. However, much less frequently they are spread by sharing clothing or belongings. The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a carpet or furniture is very small. Head lice survive less than 1-2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept near body temperature.* Items that have been in contact with the head of the person with infestation in the 24-48 hours before treatment should be considered for cleaning.



CHECK EVERYONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD AT THE SAME TIME

Everyone in the household should be checked at the same time before cleaning the environment. This includes grandparents, younger and older siblings, and parents. Statistics have suggested that 60% of people with head lice don't know they have them and have no symptoms. They may be unintentionally infecting others and continuing the cycle.

LAUNDER ANY PERSONAL ITEMS THAT COULD BE INFESTED WITH HEAD LICE

Personal items to be laundered include clothing, bedding, towels, cloth toys, etc. Items should be washed for at least 10 minutes in hot water and/or dried on high heat for at least 30 minutes. For items that cannot be washed, seal in a plastic bag and store for 14 days at room temperature or 24 hours in below freezing temperatures.



VACUUM

Items that should be vacuumed include bare mattresses, carpets, floors, stuffed animals, coat collars, hats, couches, chairs, and car upholstery. There is no need to discard the vacuum bag after cleaning, except for aesthetic purposes. Head lice cannot survive without a blood meal.

INSPECT HAIRBRUSHES, COMBS, HAIR TIES, AND BARRETTES

For washable accessories, wash and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes. Soak combs, brushes and barrettes in water hotter than 130°F. If items cannot be exposed to high heat, soak them in Lysol® or rubbing alcohol for one hour.

The use of lice sprays for the house can be dangerous and is not recommended.

*Centers for disease control and Prevention, Parasites – Lice – Head Lice – Prevention and control, www.cdc.gov (2013)