



HEAD LICE

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are small, wingless, parasitic insects, approximately the size of a sesame seed. They make their home in human hair and feed on blood. Head lice multiply rapidly, laying small greyish-colored, oval-shaped eggs (called nits) which they glue to the base of the hair, close to the scalp. Head lice are not known to spread disease and they cannot live longer than 48 hours off the head.



Day 0

Stray lice contracted



Day 4

Eggs/nits laid



Days 7-10

Nymphs (immature lice)



Days 14-21

Mature lice start laying eggs



4-6 Weeks

Itching symptoms begin

WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?

Lice are found in all countries and climates around the world. In the United States, 6-12 million head lice infestations occur in children age 3-11 each year.

WHO CAN GET HEAD LICE?

Head lice will seek any human head with hair to feed from and attach their eggs to. Head lice affect people of all ethnicities and socioeconomic statuses. Lice crawl from head to head. They cannot jump or fly. Anyone who has direct head-to-head or hair-to-hair contact with another person who has an infestation of lice is also at risk of getting lice.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE LICE?

The most common sign of head lice is persistent itching of the head and neck. Check the head for crawling lice, nits glued to the hair (commonly behind the ears and at the nape of the neck), or scratch marks or small red marks on the head or back of neck near the hairline.

Other symptoms of lice may include a tickling sensation on the head and difficulty sleeping.

HOW DO I PREVENT HEAD LICE?

Good lice prevention strategies include:

- Avoidance of direct head-to-head contact with others
- Regular checks of a child's head for signs of nits or lice, especially if they are between 3-11 years old
- Never share hair grooming tools or hair accessories (combs, brushes, hair ties, barrettes, clips, etc.)
- Never share unwashed towels, clothing, hats, scarves, or other headgear
- Clean or wash things that have been in close contact with lice (head coverings, hats, scarves, pillowcases, brushes, combs, etc.)

HOW DO I TREAT HEAD LICE?

It is recommended to treat lice promptly and be thorough and consistent in rechecking that the treatment was effective in removing lice and nits. It is not recommended to preventatively treat children with no evidence of head lice.

Children do NOT need to remain home from school while being treated for lice.

Nit Combing

Apply conditioner or oil to hair and separate into 1-inch sections. Starting at the scalp, comb each section from root to tip with a fine-toothed metal louse/nit comb. After each stroke, wipe or rinse the comb to remove any lice or eggs. Repeat for each section of hair. Once the entire head is combed, rinse the hair and recheck for any remaining lice or eggs. you've combed your entire head, rinse your hair and check for any remaining lice or eggs. Soak the comb in hot water for 5-10 minutes. Repeat every other day for 2 weeks.

Home Remedies

Mayonnaise: Massage mayonnaise into the hair, cover with a shower cap, and leave overnight. Wash in the morning and comb with a fine tooth comb or nit comb. Repeat in one week if needed. Essential Oils: tea tree, peppermint, lavender, clove, and eucalyptus oils have shown effectiveness. These oils can be mixed with a carrier oil (almond, olive, etc.) and applied to the scalp and hair or mixed with rubbing alcohol and sprayed onto the hair. After leaving for 12 hours, the hair is washed and combed.

OTC Treatments

Over-the-counter treatments containing Permethrin 1% lotion (Nix) or Pyrethrins combined with piperonyl butoxide (Rid) act as an insecticide that kills live lice. These treatments must be combined with nit combing as they do not kill or remove nits. These treatments may need to be repeated in 7 days.

Prescription

Prescription treatments can be obtained from your healthcare provider. These treatments contain ingredients like Benzyl alcohol lotion, 5%, Ivermectin lotion, 0.5%, Malathion lotion, 0.5%, or Spinosad 0.9%. Depending on the selected treatment, it may kill live lice or live lice and unhatched eggs. Following the directions from your provider will be important in ensuring effective treatment.

****The above are a small selection of treatment options to consider. It is important for individual families to decide what method of treatment will work best for them****