

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are small wingless insects that live in hair and feed on blood from the scalp. Head lice is a common problem for kids. They are not dangerous and don't spread disease, but they are a nuisance and can be difficult to get rid of.

Head lice are not a sign of poor hygiene and can affect people of all backgrounds and hair types. Their bites can make a person's scalp itchy and irritated.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET HEAD LICE?

Head lice cannot jump, hop or fly - they can only crawl quickly. People can get head lice from close, prolonged head-to-head contact with an infested person. This can happen during playtime at school, at home, and many other places.

Although uncommon, people can get head lice by sharing clothing or belongings such as hats, towels, and stuffed animals, or by lying on a bed, pillow or carpet that has recently been in contact with an infested person.



BE SAFE

Never use dangerous products like gasoline or kerosene, or medicines for animals. Spraying pesticides in the home can expose your family to dangerous chemicals and are not necessary if the scalp is treated properly.

While home remedies like petroleum jelly, olive oil, mayonnaise or essential oils may suffocate head lice, no studies prove they work. If you want to try these methods, talk with your child's doctor first.

WHEN CAN MY CHILD RETURN TO SCHOOL IF THEY HAD LICE?

Pinellas County Schools has a no-nit policy. This means if your child has head lice, they cannot return to school until all live lice and nits are removed.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

cdc.gov (CDC website)
kidshealth.org (Nemours)
healthychildren.org (American Academy of Pediatrics)

A FAMILY'S GUIDE TO HEAD LICE



SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES
727-588-6320

HOW DO I KNOW MY CHILD HAS LICE?

If your child has lice, they may say they feel something tickling or moving in their hair. You may also see them itching their head or see sores from scratching. Some kids have a hard time sleeping because head lice are active in the dark.

When you check your child's head, you may see tiny yellow, tan, or brown dots on the hair shaft, close to the scalp. These are nits. Nits are the eggs of the lice and will hatch 1-2 weeks after they are laid. Nits may look like dandruff, but they don't come off if you brush or shake them.

After hatching, it takes about 2 weeks for a louse to become an adult. Adult lice are no bigger than a sesame seed and can be grey, white or tan. The life cycle of head lice repeats itself about every 3 weeks.



HOW CAN I CHECK FOR HEAD LICE?

Regular checks for head lice are the best ways to spot lice before they have time to multiply.

- Check in a brightly lit room or in the sun
- Wet your child's hair and use conditioner to help get through any tangles
- Part the hair
- Look for crawling lice and nits on the scalp one section at a time
- Live lice move quickly! They can be hard to find
- Use a fine-tooth comb (such as a nit comb) to help you search section by section
- Comb from the root to the tip, and wipe the comb after each pass

Check all family members regularly since lice can pass easily from person to person in the same house.

I FOUND LICE - NOW WHAT?

You may want to check with your child's doctor before starting any head lice treatment. The two main ways to treat lice are with medicine and removing by hand.

Medicines: Medicated shampoos are available that kill live lice. These may be over-the-counter or need a prescription. If you are using medicine, always follow the directions closely. Use too little won't work, and using too much can be harmful for your child. Medicines will not remove nits - they will need to be removed by hand.

Removing by hand: If you don't want to use medicine, you will need to remove some lice and nits by hand. Use a fine-tooth comb on wet, conditioned hair every 3-4 days for 3 weeks after the last live louse was seen. Use your fingers to pull all nits off the hair shaft.

Treat your environment, too!

- Wash all bed linens, stuffed animals, and clothing used during the 2 days before treatment in very hot water and dry on the hot cycle. If you can't wash items, put them in airtight bags for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum carpets and upholstery in your home and car.
- Soak combs, brushes, hair ties, and other hair items in hot water.

