

HEAD LICE EDUCATION

A head louse is a tiny, wingless insect that can attach to a person's hair, where it feeds on tiny amounts of blood drawn from the scalp. Head lice, while annoying, aren't dangerous and they don't spread disease.

Signs and Symptoms

- severe itching of the scalp
- nits (lice eggs that look like tiny oval specks of grey or yellow-white on the hair shaft close to the scalp)
- lice (gray or reddish brown tiny insects on the hair shaft)
- small red bumps on the scalp
- a rash on the scalp, with crusting and oozing (if severe)
- swollen lymph glands in the neck

What to Do

A doctor will recommend a medicated rinse or lotion to kill the lice. It's important to **follow the directions for these products** exactly because applying too much or too often can be harmful.

Here are some ways to get rid of lice and their eggs around the house:

- Check everyone in the house for lice and get treatment if necessary.
- Wash all bed linens and clothing in very hot water, then put them in the hot cycle of the dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Dry clean any clothing, bed linens, and stuffed animals that aren't machine washable.
- Vacuum carpets and any cloth-covered furniture in your home or car.
- Discard hair-care items or soak them in rubbing alcohol for 1 hour, then wash them in hot soapy water.
- While not necessary, you can remove nits from hair with a fine-tooth comb.

Get Medical Care if Your Child:

- shows any signs of having lice
- is constantly scratching or complains of itching that doesn't go away
- has scratched the scalp to the point of redness, swelling, bleeding, or visible pus

Think Prevention!

You can help protect your kids from head lice by teaching them to:

- avoid head-to-head contact with other children
- not share combs, brushes, hair ties, hats, etc.
- not lie on bedding, pillows, and carpets that have recently been used by someone with lice

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How to Examine for Head Lice

Use bright light to look at:

- 1 Crown of head
- 2 Bangs
- 3 Behind both ears
- 4 Nape of neck

How to inspect

- 1 Place gloves on your hands
- 2 Use fingers to separate hair and create a part. The part should allow you to clearly see the person's scalp.
- 3 Look for lice crawling on the scalp where the hair is parted or on the hair shaft. The lice will be dark in color and the size of a poppyseed.
- 4 Look for nits near hair follicle about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch from scalp. Nits (eggs) will be white or yellowish-brown. Nits are often more easily seen than lice, especially when the person has dark hair.
- 5 Also look behind both ears and near the back of the neck. You may see lice or nits. You may also see bites.

SCREENING TIP:

To distinguish between dandruff and nits, try to flick or pull off the white speck. Dandruff is easily pulled off, but nits are not.

Change gloves between each child's examination and wash your hands after all examinations are completed.

The size of a nit (egg), nymph, and louse relative to a penny



CDC photos

A. Checking hair for lice



CDC photos

B. Nits (lice eggs) on hair



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