

Let's Talk About Lice

Lice do not carry disease and they cannot make you sick. Lice aren't dangerous. They are annoying: louse bites can itch. If someone scratches a lot, it may lead to skin irritation and even infection.

Lice cannot jump or fly. They spread from person to person when people's heads touch or after sharing things like hats and other clothing, combs, brushes, headbands, or barrettes. Lice can live up to 2 days without feeding on a person, so you also can get lice from pillowcases, sheets, blankets, sleeping bags, and other bedding. Children CANNOT get lice just by being in school or in a classroom with another child who has lice.

Lice have nothing to do with personal hygiene. Anyone can get head lice. Lice love everyone! Lice spread group settings (like camp or even slumber parties) because these are places where people are in close contact. School is generally not the place where children get lice, but they can be discovered during the school day if a child is itching.

Itching does not mean that the lice have just arrived on your child's head. By the time a child starts itching the lice have probably been on the head for 3 weeks or longer. There is no "season" for lice. Parents should check their children's heads on a regular basis all year round. If lice are found on your child during the school day, you will be notified. Your child does not have to leave school and may continue to attend school while you treat the lice at home.

My child has lice, now what do I do?

- Notify the school. We DO NOT release the names of children or families who have head lice.
- Lice are insects, so the treatments for lice are basically insecticides or pesticides. To avoid getting overexposed, you'll need to FOLLOW TREATMENT DIRECTIONS EXACTLY AS WRITTEN.
- If you choose to get rid of lice without using medicine, talk to your doctor to decide on the best way.
- COMB, comb, and then comb again. OTC treatments only kill live lice, not nits. Nits are tiny, hard, white eggs that are stuck on the hair shaft. Parents should remove eggs/nits in the days following treatment. Nits hatch into live lice in 7-10 days. You'll need to remove lice and nits carefully each week, for at least 3 weeks in a row. Watch for any live lice and take action if you see them.
- Lice can sometimes be hard to get rid of. If you still have lice 2 weeks after you started treatment, let your doctor know. Your doctor may want to try a different medication or repeat treatment in case any nits were left behind and hatched after treatment.

Scratching a lot can lead to a scalp infection. Call your doctor as soon as possible if:

- the skin on your scalp is red and tender
- your scalp has crusting and oozing

For more information on how lice spread or how to get rid of lice, please visit the following resources:

<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/head-lice.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>