

The facts of lice



What are lice?

Lice are tiny wingless insects that live on a person's scalp and feed on their blood. About the size of a sesame seed, lice lay eggs called nits, which they glue to hairs, close to the scalp.

Symptoms of head lice

Your child may have head lice if he or she complains of:

- A tickling feeling in the hair, like something is moving
- An itchy scalp
- Sores on the head caused by scratching

How to check for lice

Carefully part your child's hair with a comb and look for the insect's eggs. Lice eggs, laid in the hair close to the scalp, look like tiny white or yellow ovals and often are mistaken for dandruff flakes.

Each year, head lice get into the hair of **6 to 12 million kids**, ages 3 to 11.

How head lice are spread

Head lice are mainly spread by direct head-to-head contact, which can be common among kids during play at school, camp, day care or slumber parties.

How to treat head lice

- 1. Kill the insects.** Apply an over-the-counter or prescription medication that will kill lice and nits. Follow the instructions on the label. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb.
- 2. Check the hair** of family members and close contacts, like babysitters and your child's close friends, for head lice. Keep checking family members for two weeks to be sure the lice are gone.
- 3. Clean any items** your child has worn or used in the past 48 hours. Machine wash clothes and bedding in hot water. Also vacuum carpet and furniture.

How to reduce your child's risk

Encourage your child not to share items that touch the head, like hairbrushes, pillows and hats, and to avoid head-to-head contact while playing with other kids.

Head lice myths, busted!

1. Head lice cannot jump or fly from head-to-head.
2. Getting lice is not a sign of dirty hair or poor hygiene. Lice, do not care if your hair is clean or dirty. Anyone can get them.
3. You cannot get lice from your pets.
4. Lice do not spread disease.