

HEAD LICE

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that live in human hair and feed on the blood circulating in the scalp. Nits are the eggs of adult head lice. Once lice lay nits, the nits take about a week to hatch.

Head lice spread when people are in close contact and this is why children and teens are more susceptible to infection because their heads are often close together as they play or do their schoolwork. Some children are more susceptible and will get head lice several times a year.

If your child gets head lice, it's nothing to be embarrassed about. It doesn't mean your child and home are dirty. Head lice don't carry any diseases.

Symptoms of head lice or nits

If your child has head lice, the first thing you might notice is your child itching and scratching, especially around the back of his neck and behind his ears. But many children have no symptoms.

If you think your child might have head lice, you should check for head lice in every member of your household.

You should see your doctor if:

- your child is itching and scratching a lot and it interrupts her sleep
- sores develop on your child's scalp
- your child has been treated three or more times in a year.

1

Head lice treatment

You should treat all affected family members at the same time. There are two ways to treat head lice

Anti-lice lotions, liquids and creams

You can get anti-lice products from your pharmacy without a prescription. Lotions, liquids and creams are more effective than shampoos. It's important to follow the instructions carefully. Head lice are becoming resistant to the chemicals in these products, so it's important to check that the lice are dead once you've used the treatment. If they aren't dead, try using a product with a different active ingredient. The different active ingredients in these products include permethrin, maldison or pyrethrin. Ask your pharmacist if you're not sure which product to try. You'll need to treat your child again about one week after the first lice treatment, to kill any eggs that have hatched and become mature lice since the first treatment.

2

Wet-combing treatment

This head lice treatment involves combing wet hair with a special fine-toothed, metal lice comb and hair conditioner. You can buy these combs from your pharmacy, and any type of conditioner will do.

Here's what to do:

1. Apply lots of conditioner to your child's wet hair. Rub it into the scalp and along the hair shafts.
2. Leave the conditioner on for at least 15 minutes. You might want to put a shower cap over your child's head while you're waiting. The conditioner suffocates the lice, and they release their claws from the hair shaft or scalp.
3. Use the special lice comb to remove the conditioner from your child's hair. Insert the comb until it gently touches the scalp and then brush down firmly. Clean the comb between strokes using a tissue or tap water. You'll often be able to see how many lice you've combed out of your child's hair.
4. Comb your child's entire head thoroughly at least twice.

Repeated wet-combing is a very good head lice treatment. Comb every 2-3 days for two weeks, until a full combing doesn't show any eggs or lice on the entire scalp.

Wet-combing takes time, often more than 30 minutes. You can distract your child by discussing the day's events, or letting your child read a book, play games on a mobile device, or watch the TV or a movie while you comb.

If your child has been treated for head lice more than three times in a year, you might like to talk to your GP about other treatments for head lice. Children who keep getting head lice can be prescribed a medication called ivermectin, which is very good at killing lice.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Headlice or any other health problem don't hesitate to contact your SBYHN at school.

Yours in Health

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