

Head Lice (A parent's Guide)

(Which came first, the itchin' or the egg?)

What is it? An insect found mostly on the head. Head lice are extremely common, as 6-12 million people get head lice every year. You are not alone!



(Adult lice compared to a dime)

Who is at risk?? Kids aged 3-10 and their families are at the greatest risk.

How is it spread? Lice do not hop or jump or fly. They crawl. They spread from person to person contact during such activities as

- * Slumber parties, sports activities and playground activities.
- * Sharing of sports uniforms, coats, scarves, hats or hair accessories.
- * Sharing infested brushes, combs or towels.
- * Laying on an infested pillow, stuffed animal, bedding or carpet.

Are there symptoms?

1. A tickling feeling on the scalp.
2. Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites.
3. Sores on the head from excessive scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected

Where should I look? Close to the scalp behind the ears and at the neckline in the back of the head.

Nits, Nymphs and adults - Nits are lice eggs. They are yellow or white, smaller than a grain of rice and difficult to see. They are often confused with dandruff. Nymphs are baby lice, reddish brown in color and grow to adult lice in about 7 days. Adult lice are about the size of a small grain of rice and are pictured next to a dime in the photo at the top of this page. Adult lice live about 30 days.

Do you get lice from pets or animals? - No. (That was an easy one)

All right, were scratching, now what? First treat the infected person.

- * Remove clothing before treating (clothing may be infested)
- * Work under bright light (sunlight, bright indoor lamp)
- * Several treatment options are listed on the back of this sheet.
- * Do NOT use crème rinse or conditioning shampoo before treatment
- * Put on clean clothes after treatment
- * Comb dead and remaining lice out of hair after treatment.
- * Re-treat as necessary, especially for long or thick hair.
- * Check treated person for 2 to 3 weeks until you are sure all nits and lice are gone.

These old fashion remedies have been suggested by clients to the Community Health Agency.

Remember it takes at least 7 days of work to be rid of lice. It is important to treat everyone in your home and thoroughly clean your home during these 7 days as eggs may be spread throughout your home. Many prescription remedies don't work due to their over-use. Medicated shampoos and nit combs are often not enough. You actually need to pick the lice eggs (nits) out of the hair, carpeting, bedding and other furniture. You need to be diligent to make sure all of the lice and their eggs are destroyed. These suggestions are not based on scientific data, but on suggestions from clients of the Health Department that have worked over the years.

1. (This treatment takes about 12 hours). This method has been the most successful.

- * **Rub olive oil all over the child's head. Work it right down into the scalp.**
- * **Cover hair with a plastic shower cap (use extreme caution with small children under 3).**
- * **leave cap on for 12 hours.**
- * **Shampoo several times with a mild shampoo.**
- * **This method may be repeated a second time for very thick or long hair.**

2. Use Felsnaptha Soap (found in most grocery stores with other bar soaps) as a regular shampoo daily for 3 days.

After treatment option #1 or #2, you next need be sure all nits (eggs) are removed. This can be done with your fingers, tweezers or an old toothbrush. With a toothbrush be sure to brush away from the scalp. Be sure to work in bright light and take your time. It is essential all nits be removed. If you do not feel you can effectively remove all of the nits yourself, the following method is recommended (to be done after one of the above treatments has been completed).

- * Mix 1 cup of mineral oil with ½ cup of non-aerosol hair spray – rub thoroughly into the scalp.
- * Leave mixture in hair for 10 minutes.
- * Wash hair with shampoo.
- * Comb or pick out nits. (Nit comb, tweezers or fingers)
- * Note: Hair will be oily, so wash often.

Cleaning instructions that are a MUST in addition to treating infested hair.

- * Wash infested clothes, bed linens, favorite blanket and towels. (HOT water is a must)
- * Soak combs and brushes in boiling water for 10 minutes (or soak in rubbing alcohol for 20 min.)
- * Vacuum EVERYWHERE; Carpets, pillows, mattresses, upholstered furniture, car seats, car headrests. **(I did mean everywhere!)**
- * Stuffed animals can be put in sealed bags for 10 days or in a hot dryer for 20 minutes

For more information contact the Branch Hillsdale St. Joseph Community Health Agency at:

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