

## Head Lice - Let's Fight Them Together!



### So Remember: Once A Week, Take A Peek!

If you find lice, don't worry or be embarrassed. Head lice are a normal part of childhood - nearly 1 in 10 primary school children could have head lice at any one time. If you're a parent you probably know what a hassle it is to treat head lice and just how frustrating it can be when your child comes home scratching their head yet again.

But parents can fight the spread of head lice by working together:

- Check your family's hair for lice regularly - once a week is ideal!
- Visit your local pharmacist/consult your doctor for guidance on the various treatments available
- Get treatment for you or your family as soon as you find live lice
- Let your friends and family know as soon as you've found live lice

## Head Lice: The Facts

Head lice are live insects. Their empty eggs are called nits. Lice are wingless insects that hold on to the hair, feeding from the blood in the scalp. They spread through head-to-head contact but contrary to common belief, they do not jump. Adult females live for up to a month and lay around five eggs a day. Lice spread when heads come in contact so sleepovers, after-school activities, playing with friends and visiting family are also common places for children, and adults, to pick them up and pass them on.

### 7 Key Head Lice Facts:

- Head lice are common among young children and their families
- Head lice don't spread disease
- Head lice can be spread from adults to children and back again
- There's nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about having head lice
- Having head lice has nothing to do with good or bad personal hygiene
- Lice eggs hatch after around 7 days so two applications of lice killing treatments are needed to make sure all lice have been killed
- There are pesticide, non-pesticide, combing and alternative treatments on the market. Your pharmacist/health care provider will be able to help you work out which is best for you and your family

## Check

### *It's Just Routine*

Checking for lice might not be your idea of fun but it's also no big deal and shouldn't be a stressful experience for you or your child. This section will show you how to check properly:

- Where to peek
- What to peek for
- How to peek

Checking is just a normal part of every family's personal hygiene routine, like brushing your teeth or washing your hair, so a good time to do it would be in front of the TV after having a bath and hair wash. You could make this experience even more stress-free by:

- Showing your child how to check their own hair using a lice detection comb
- Using the weekly peek as an opportunity to tell a story or ask about their day
- Asking them to check your hair for you
- Rewarding your child for each week's successful search
- Turning it into a fun game of hide and seek
- Putting their favorite TV show or DVD on

### ***So How Do You Find Head Lice?***

**If you're feeling unsure don't worry, you're not alone - 1 in 4 parents aren't sure how to check for head lice properly.**

To diagnose a case of head lice you need to find them alive. This is when you need to use a treatment. They move fast and are small - from the size of a period at the end of a sentence to a sesame seed - so they can be hard to find!

Good lighting is important and so is comfort! Comb for lice, parting hair in small sections, and return from time to time to areas you've already covered just to make sure. Combing through thick, curly or African American hair will be more difficult so a good idea is to dampen the hair and comb through with a normal comb first to remove any tangles. You can also oil the hair using light oil, such as grape seed, which will help let the fine-tooth nit comb pass through easier during your search



**Tip:** A strong, fine-tooth plastic comb is an essential. Make sure the teeth of the comb are close together in order to successfully trap head lice

### ***Sizing Up Head Lice***

Head lice range in sizes from a period at the end of a sentence to a sesame seed.



*Actual size in stages of growth.*

And remember, if you find head lice on one member of your family you need to check **everybody in your family!**

If your child is treated for head lice, please inform the school nurse. Your child may return to school after proper treatment and the nurse evaluates the status of your child's hair. The student should be brought to the school nurse by the parent and after being checked and cleared by the school nurse, may return to class. Due to privacy issues, the school nurse is not able to discuss specific cases of pediculosis (lice). Other children and family members your child has been in contact with will need to be checked. It is the parent's responsibility to inform these contacts.

Since head lice are spread from head to head contact, wearing long hair in ponytails, braids or buns can limit contact. Children should be discouraged from hugging and putting heads together.

If you need assistance, the school nurse is available for help. There are reliable sources on head lice identification treatment and prevention on the internet. Images, videos and written material are a click away. The following sites provide accurate information on head lice:

[http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen\\_info/faqs.html](http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html)

<http://www.headlice.org/faq/lousology.htm>

<http://www.skinsight.com/adult/pediculosisCapitisHeadLice.htm>

<https://identify.us.com/index.html>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/headlice.html>