



Head Lice Signs, Symptoms & Care

A head louse is a tiny, wingless insect that can attach to a person's hair where it feeds on extremely small amounts of blood drawn from the scalp. Lice aren't dangerous and they don't spread disease. Lice eggs (nits) are seen more commonly than lice in children.

Signs & Symptoms

- Severe itching of the scalp
- Nits (tiny oval specks of grey or yellow-white on the hair shaft)
- Lice (reddish-brown tiny insects on the hair shaft)
- Small, red bumps on the scalp
- A rash on the scalp, with crusting and oozing (if severe)
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck

What to do:

A doctor will recommend a medicated rinse or lotion to kill the lice. It is important to **follow the directions for these products** exactly because applying them too much or too frequently can be harmful.

Here are some simple ways to get rid of lice and their eggs around the house:

- Check everyone in the house for lice and seek treatment, if necessary.
- Wash all bed linens and clothing in very hot water, then put them in the hot cycle of the dryer for at least 20 minutes.
- Dry clean any clothing, bed linens, and stuffed animals that aren't machine washable.
- Vacuum carpets and any cloth-covered furniture in your home or car.
- Discard hair-care items or soak them in rubbing alcohol for 1 hour, then wash them in hot soapy water.

Seek Medical Care if the Child:

- Shows any sign of having lice
- Is constantly scratching or complains of itches that don't go away
- Has scratched the scalp to the point of redness, swelling, or visible pus

Think Prevention!

You can help prevent head lice by telling kids:

- To try to avoid head-to-head contact with other children
- Not to share combs, brushes, hair ties, hats, etc.
- Not to lie on bedding, pillows, and carpets that have recently been used by someone with lice