

What If My Child Gets Head Lice?

If you suspect your child might have head lice, it's important to talk to a school nurse, pediatrician or family physician to get appropriate care. There are a number of available treatments, including new prescription treatment options that are safe and do not require nit combing. Other things to consider in selecting and starting treatment include:

- Follow treatment instructions. Using extra amounts or multiple applications of the same medication is not recommended, unless directed by healthcare professional.⁶
- Resistance to some over-the-counter head lice treatments has been reported. The prevalence of resistance is not known.^{6,7}
- There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.⁸
- Head lice do not infest the house. However, family bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels should be washed in very hot water.⁴
- Personal articles, such as combs, brushes and hair clips, should also be washed in hot soapy water or thrown away if they were exposed to the persons with active head lice infestation.⁴

All household members and other close contacts should be checked, and those with evidence of an active infestation should also be treated at the same time.⁴

References

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head Lice: Frequently Asked Questions. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html. Accessed October 12, 2012.
- ² Meinking T, Taplin D, Vicaria M. Infestations. In: Schachner LA, Hansen RC, eds. *Pediatric Dermatology*, 4th ed. Mosby Elsevier; 2011:1525-1583.
- ³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Head lice: Epidemiology And Risk Factors. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/epi.html>. Accessed June 30, 2012.
- ⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head Lice: Diagnosis. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/diagnosis.html>. Accessed January 27, 2012.

Myths & Facts About Head Lice

Myth: Only dirty people get head lice.

Fact: Personal hygiene or household or school cleanliness are not factors for infestation. In fact, head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits.^{2,3}

Myth: Head lice carry diseases.

Fact: Head Lice do not spread diseases.¹

Myth: Head lice can be spread by sharing hairbrushes, hats, clothes and other personal items.

Fact: It is uncommon to spread head lice by contact with clothing or other personal items, such as combs, brushes or hair accessories, that have been in contact with a person with head lice.¹

Myth: Head lice can jump or fly, and can live anywhere.

Fact: Head lice cannot jump or fly, and only move by crawling. It is unlikely to find head lice living on objects like helmets or hats because they have feet that are specifically designed to grasp on to the hair shaft of humans. Additionally, a louse can only live for a few hours off the head.¹

Myth: You can use home remedies like mayonnaise to get rid of head lice.

Fact: There is no scientific evidence that home remedies are effective treatments.⁸ A healthcare provider can discuss appropriate treatment options, including prescription products.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Head lice: Treatment. <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>. Accessed October 12, 2012.

² Burkhart CG. Relationship of treatment resistant head lice to the safety and efficacy of pediculicides. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2004;79(5):661-666.

³ Meinking TL, Serrano L, Hard B, et al. Comparative in vitro pediculicidal efficacy of treatments in a resistant head lice population in the US. *Arch Dermatol.* 2002;138(2):220-224.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Parasites: Lice: Head lice: Treatment Frequently Asked Questions. http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs_treat.html. Accessed October 18, 2012.