

Facts about Head Lice -Head lice are tiny insects that live on the scalp. These insects lay eggs, called nits, which stick to hair very close to the scalp. Head lice do not spread disease. Head lice are very common in child care centers because the lice spread easily among children who are together in one place. Head lice are not spread because children have not washed properly.

Head lice spread from person to person by direct contact among children or on items such as hats, combs, hairbrushes and headphones. Head lice may or may not make a child's scalp itchy.

There are a number of very effective treatments for head lice. All the treatments contain an insecticide that kills the lice. If a child has head lice, a pharmacist can recommend proper treatment.

How to Determine if Your Child has Head Lice - Where to look: close to the scalp, behind the ears, the back of the neck and top of the head. Look for: Adult lice - 1 mm (1/8 in.) long - are hard to see. The nits (or eggs) are easier to see. Nits are firmly attached to the hair close to the scalp. Nits are greyish white in colour and are oval in shape. Nits may look like dandruff but they cannot be flicked off.

How to Check: Spend a few minutes every week checking your child's head. Good lighting is important. Look for nits by parting hair in small sections going from one side of the head to the other. Check carefully, looking close to the scalp. They are especially difficult to see on blond hair.

Things Parents Can Do: Check your child's hair for nits immediately, after one week, and then again after two weeks if another child has head lice. All family members (adults and children) must be checked if one member has head lice. Get a treatment for head lice. **These products are available by asking the pharmacist; regular shampoo/conditioners are not effective.** A prescription is not needed. Follow the directions on the product. Rinse hair well after the treatment. Remove nits from hair after treatment by running hair strands between your thumb and finger nail. **This must be done. If not, reoccurrence is very likely.** Put the nits in a bag, tie it up and throw it out.

Note: Most shampoos will require **two** treatments, that day and again seven days later.

Collect all clothes, towels and bed linens used by the person with head lice in the last two days. Wash these items in hot water and dry in a dryer at the hottest setting. Clothes that cannot be washed may be dry cleaned or put in clothes dryer at the hottest setting for at least 20 minutes. Non-washable items should be put in a sealed plastic bag for two weeks. Put pillows and non-washable furry toys in a clothes dryer at the hottest setting for at least 20 minutes.

Clean combs and brushes by soaking them overnight in the head lice treatment. Never share combs, brushes or hats. Vacuum carpets, mattresses, upholstered furniture and car seats thoroughly.

Check all family members daily for the next two weeks. Avoid using insecticide sprays to get rid of lice; they may be harmful to people and pets.

If your child has head lice, treatment must be given and all nits removed before he or she returns to school. Consider establishing a regular routine of checking your children for nits. This could be done, for example, when shampooing hair.