

Head Lice

What are head lice? They are tiny bugs that live on the scalp and hair. You may see:

- Small grayish eggs ("nits") about the size of a sesame seed
 - Attached firmly to the base of hairs
 - Often behind the ears and neck
- Tiny bugs ("lice") crawling in hair, bite marks on scalp
- Scratching at scalp

How do head lice spread? They are very contagious. They spread by:

- Touching hair
- Sharing combs, brushes, hats, clothes, stuffed animals, towels, pillows, bedding, furniture, and carpets

When are head lice contagious?

- As long as the bugs or nits are alive. Nits hatch in seven to 10 days, and lice can live on the scalp for 20-30 days.
- When lice and nits are off the body (e.g., on clothes), they die within seven days.

How do I know if my child has head lice? By seeing the nits or lice in the hair

What should I do if my child has head lice?

Treatment: Consult your doctor for the appropriate treatment; some are dangerous for infants and women who are pregnant or nursing.

- Shampoo hair with special shampoo that kills lice and nits. Follow the instructions carefully.
- Remove all nits with a fine-tooth comb and by hand.
- Sometimes a second treatment is needed one or two weeks later to kill the lice that hatched from surviving nits.

Keep your child home until: after treatment is completed, and he or she is free of nits. Notify your Head Start program.

To limit the spread:

- Every day, for two weeks, check everyone at home and at school for lice and nits. Treat if necessary. . Don't share combs and brushes. Wash them in the anti-lice shampoo; boil in water for 10 minutes; OR soak in bleach solution for one hour.
- Don't share hats and jackets. Keep personal clothes and bedding separate in individual cubbies for each child.
- Launder clothes, linen, bedding, stuffed animals, and small carpets in with detergent and hot water. Dry in hot dryer or press with hot iron. For non-washable items, dry-clean or seal in plastic bag for 10 to 14 days.
- Vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, and car seats.