

Head Lice

What you should know

What are they?

Head lice are tiny insects that live on a person's scalp and lay eggs (called "nits").

- Typically live 3–4 weeks.
- Can lay several eggs daily.
- Don't carry disease.
- Live on humans, not on pets.



Who's at risk?

Anyone can get head lice. A person can get them more than once.

- Hygiene and cleanliness aren't factors.
- Most common in young children.
- Girls get them more often, but boys get them, too.

What are the symptoms?

- Itchy scalp.
- Tickling or crawling feeling on the head.
- Small red bumps or sores from scratching.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping.
- Tiny, oval-shaped eggs and sesame seed-sized bugs.
- Sometimes no symptoms occur.



How do they spread?

Lice don't fly or jump. They crawl from one head to another.

- Usually spread by direct head-to-head contact.
- Can spread by sharing items that touch your head.

How do I check?

Use a bright light and a magnifying glass to check the scalp and hair.

- Look for nits (lice eggs). They are oval-shaped and can be clear, white, yellow, brown, or gray.
- Nits are usually found on the scalp, especially around the ears and the back of the neck.
- May feel like grains of sand.
- Questions? Contact your healthcare provider.



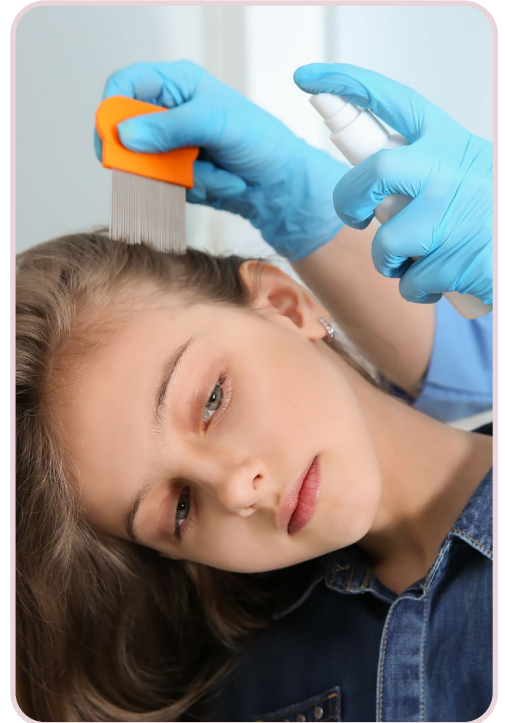


What if my child has them?

Notify your childcare provider or school immediately.

How are they treated?

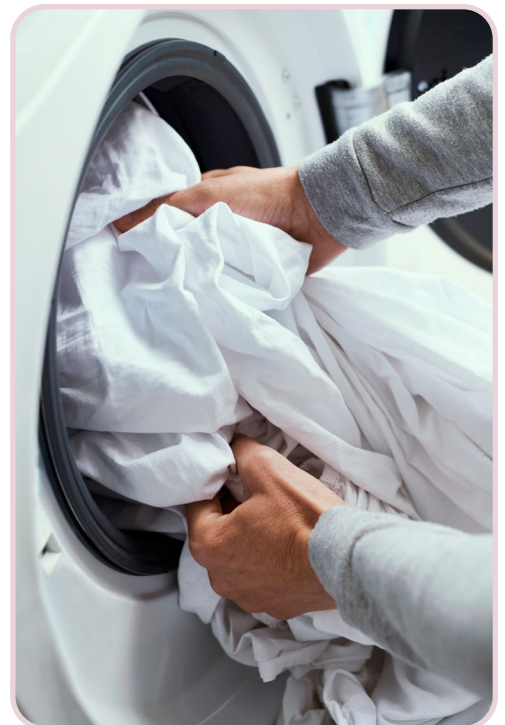
- Treatment for head lice includes over-the-counter and prescription options.
 - Talk to your healthcare provider—especially if you're pregnant or breastfeeding or your child is younger than 2 years.
- Follow directions carefully.
- After each treatment, use a fine-toothed comb to remove lice and nits every 2–3 days for 2–3 weeks.
- You may need to repeat treatment 7–9 days after the first treatment—but talk to your healthcare provider before starting a second or third medication.
- Clean items that touched the head in the 48 hours before treatment.
 - Wash sheets, pillowcases, hats, and clothing with hot water (130°F). Dry with high heat.
 - Soak brushes, combs, and hair accessories in hot water (130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
 - Vacuum the floor, furniture, and car seats. Throw the vacuum bag away or empty the canister in a container outside.
- Options for items you can't wash:
 - Run it in a hot dryer for 30 minutes.
 - Seal in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
 - Dry clean it.
 - Don't fumigate or use pesticides—they can do more harm than good.



How can I stop them spreading?

Avoid head-to-head contact with people who have lice.

- Keep coats, hats, and scarves in a separate area at school or childcare.
- Don't share hats, combs, coats, helmets, pillows, or other personal items.
- Pull back long hair.
- Check household members for lice—but do not use treatment medication unless lice are present.



Does my child need to stay home from childcare or school?

Your child should be able to return to childcare or school after their first treatment.