



Head Lice

What are Head Lice?

- Head lice are parasitic insects that can be found on the head, eyebrows, and eyelashes of people.
- Head lice feed on human blood and live close to the human scalp. They are not known to spread disease.

How does Head Lice spread?

- Head-to-head contact with an already infested person is the most common way you get head lice.
- Head-to-head contact is common during play at school, at home, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, and camp).
- Although uncommon, head lice can be spread by sharing clothing or belongings. This happens when lice crawl, or nits attached to hair that is shed hatch, and get on the shared clothing or belongings.
- Dogs, cats, and other pets do not play a role in the spread of head lice.

What are the symptoms?

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites of the head lice.
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark.
- Sores on the head caused by scratching.

How do I stop the spread?

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact.
- Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes. Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfect combs & brushes.
- Lice can be spread as long as lice or eggs remain viable on the infested person or on clothing/surfaces. An adult life span is approximately one month. Lice eggs remain viable on clothing for 1 month. Head lice can survive for about 2 days after falling off a person. Nymphs can only survive 24 hours without feeding. Under suitable conditions, head lice eggs can remain viable away from the host for up to 7-10 days.
- According to CDC, children diagnosed with head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun.
- CDC does not make recommendations as to what specific product or products should be used to treat individuals. Both over-the-counter and prescription products are available. You may wish to contact your doctor, pharmacist, or health department for additional information about which product they recommend.

Where can I find more information?

- Go to cdc.gov and type Head Lice in SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

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