



KNOW THE FACTS

Guidance for Handling Head Lice

Head lice are parasitic insects that feed on human blood, usually from the scalp. Anyone can get head lice through direct contact, regardless of personal hygiene and cleanliness. Head lice do not spread diseases, but do require treatment.

Symptoms of head lice

- Tickling, itching, & sensation of something moving in the hair
- Sores on the scalp, neck, & shoulders, which may become infected
- Irritability & sleeplessness
- Nits or lice eggs stick to hair shafts, usually around the ears & hairline
- Live head lice, which are about the size of a sesame seed



Who is at risk for head lice?

Young children & their household members or caretakers. Head lice can infect hair of any type or length.

How do they spread?

Head lice crawl, they cannot jump or fly. Head lice most commonly spread through direct contact with the hair of an infested person. Animals do not spread or get head lice.

Less common ways head lice can spread:

- Using infested towels, head phones, hair brushes, & combs
- Wearing infested clothes, including hats, scarves, coats, sport uniforms, & hair ribbons
- Lying on a bed, couch, pillow, or stuffed animal which has been in contact with an infested person

Prevention & Control

- Do not share hair brushes, combs, ribbons, clips, or sport headgear
- Do not share clothing, including hats & scarves
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, or stuffed animals which have been in contact with someone with lice
- Avoid hair-to-hair contact during play times, sports, or slumber parties
- Machine wash & dry clothing, towels, & bed linens. Use the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle & high heat drying cycle
- Vacuum the floor & furniture where the person with lice sat or laid down
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs
- Use over-the-counter or prescription medications to treat head lice

This sheet was adapted from information obtained from the CDC & Mayo Clinic