

From the Publishers of Parents Magazine

# heads up!

## THE FACTS OF LICE

How to **detect**, **eliminate**, and **prevent** lice

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# The Truth About Head Lice

Head lice: They're the words no parent wants to hear. Every year, as many as 12 million children are affected by these small pests. They attach to hair and feed on blood from the scalp, which causes itchiness. The good news is that lice are not harmful, but they're inconvenient and highly contagious. To treat and prevent lice, it helps to know more about them. Here we separate fact from fiction.

**MYTH: Having lice is a sign of poor hygiene.**

Lice actually prefer clean hair. They spread through close contact or sharing hats, helmets, brushes, pillows, and other personal items.

**MYTH: Lice can fly or jump.**

Lice can only crawl—but at a speedy

rate of 12 inches per minute. Once they attach to hair, they cling firmly.

**MYTH: Lice can't survive away from the human body.**

Lice can live for about 48 hours away from a human scalp. Their eggs, called nits, can survive for about 10 days.

**MYTH: Pets can host lice.**

False. Lice only feed on human blood. (That said, pets can "transport" lice from one person's hair to another if there's close contact.)

**MYTH: Head lice is hard to treat.**

Not true! There are clinically proven treatments that eliminate lice and their eggs and can even prevent re-infestation for up to 2 weeks.

Anyone  
can catch head  
lice, but it's  
most common in  
kids ages  
**5 to 12.**

# Signs of Lice



Louse

The most common symptom of head lice is itching. It's the body's reaction to the bites from lice. But just because your child is scratching his head doesn't necessarily mean he has lice. Here are further signs to look for:

- **LICE.** They are very small—about the size of a sesame seed—and they can be tan, brown, or gray. They're tough to see, but bright light and a magnifying glass can help. Part your child's hair into small sections and check on his scalp, behind the ears, and around the nape of the neck.
- **LICE EGGS** (called nits). Nits are easier to see than lice because they're stationary and appear in larger numbers. (A female louse can lay up to 400 eggs in its three-week life cycle.) Look for tiny, white, oval-sized eggs attached to hair near the scalp. They may look like dandruff, but unlike dandruff, nits can't be removed by shaking them off, brushing, or washing.
- **SMALL RED BUMPS** from scratching. Irritation from scratching may lead to scabs, blood spots, or red marks on the scalp, behind the ears, or on the back of the neck.

Peak season for lice is **AUGUST** through **OCTOBER**, and in **JANUARY** (after holiday vacations).

# Lose The Lice



Nit

If your child has head lice, you'll want to take quick action. Getting rid of the pests may seem daunting, but the process is actually rather easy. It just requires a little time, patience, and the following two-step routine. (It's important to complete both steps!)

**STEP 1** Use an over-the-counter medicated product designed to eliminate lice. Follow the directions on the package very carefully. Proper use of the product will kill the live lice in your child's hair. You may want to do a second washing 7 to 10 days later in order to kill any newly hatched lice.

**STEP 2** Use a fine-tooth comb to remove nits. Part wet hair into sections



and work one section at a time. Pin hair back after you comb out the nits so you know which sections are clean. Clean the comb completely as you go by wiping the nits off with a tissue and throwing the tissue in a sealed plastic bag. Comb for nits daily for two weeks.

\*To prevent re-infestation, and to protect other family members, it's important to remove lice from household items too. See page six for more information.

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# Avoiding Lice

At the same time you treat your child's head lice, you'll want to clean your home and her personal items. This cuts down on her chances of catching lice again—and it protects other family members, too. Here's a simple checklist for a lice-free home.

- **Vacuum** furniture, rugs, car seats, and throw pillows to remove lice or hair that may have fallen from your child's head.
- **Soak** combs, brushes, hair clips, and headbands in hot water (above 130°F) for 10 minutes.
- **Wash** personal items such as hats, clothes, towels, and bed linens in hot water (above 130°F). After washing, dry them in the dryer's hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- **Dry clean** items that can't be washed (such as blankets and stuffed animals), or seal them in a plastic bag for 2 weeks.
- **In the future**, have your child avoid borrowing or sharing other people's hair clips, combs, brushes, hats, and helmets.

Want more information on a lice-free life? You'll find tips, products, and more at [www.nixlice.com](http://www.nixlice.com)

It's unlikely to catch lice from a swimming pool. But sharing towels can spread lice, so have your child use her own.