

Lice Aren't Nice!



Your child complains of a tickling feeling in her hair or you notice that she often scratches her head. You look closely at her scalp and see sores or what look like tiny white sand grains attached to her hair. Oh, no, your child has lice!

What are head lice?

Head lice are small insects that feed on human blood. They are not dangerous nor do they carry diseases, but the bite can cause itching and sores.

How did my child get them?

Lice are very easily passed from one person to another by contact with infected clothes, bed linens, towels, combs, and hats. Children frequently pass them to others by sharing a blanket, stuffed toy, carpet, or hat.

Can head lice be prevented?

Having lice is not a sign that a child is unclean, but taking some precautions can lessen the chances of getting lice:

- Avoid close contact with an infected child.
- Teach your child not to share personal items, such as combs, hats, scarves, or hair bands.

How should head lice be treated?

- Ask your health care provider to recommend a hair treatment for lice. Carefully follow directions when using medicated treatments. Avoid using lice medication on a child under 2 years old. Your health care provider can recommend alternative treatments if you prefer not to use lice medication or if your child is under 2.
- Wash bed linens and clothing in very hot water (128.3 degrees Fahrenheit) or put them in airtight bags for 10 days. Combs, brushes, hair ribbons, or other items should be soaked in hot water or in the lice medication (or they should be thrown away). Vacuum floors and furniture, especially couches and areas used by children. Throw away the vacuum bag immediately.
- If other family members have lice, treat them at the same time as you treat your child.
- Repeat the treatment in 7 to 10 days as recommended by your health care provider. Some eggs may have survived the first treatment so this is done to kill new lice that may have hatched.

When can my child return to child care or preschool?

Illinois state day care licensing standards for child care centers require a child with head lice to be excluded from child care until the morning following the first treatment. Ask your child's teacher about the policy of your child care center or school.

The opinions, resources, and referrals provided in this Tip Sheet are intended for information purposes only. Nothing in this Tip Sheet should be considered or used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. We advise parents to seek the advice of a physician or other qualified health care provider with questions regarding their child's health or medical conditions.

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