

A Guide on
How to
Lose the Lice

headfirst!
EXPERT ADVICE ON LICE



Welcome to the *Headfirst! Lose the Lice Guide*, a quick resource on handling head lice. Whether you're in the trenches now (dealing with a case of head lice) or looking to get educated to be prepared for a future infestation, this is the guide for you.

Headfirst! is an educational initiative created to help moms, families and communities learn about head lice and how to treat them. On the following pages, you'll find information on the basics, including symptoms, diagnosis, prevention and treatment options, as well as tips and checklists designed to save you both time and stress when it's time to get rid of the little buggers.

We hope this resource answers your questions and provides you with information you need to deal with these critters.

Sincerely,
Headfirst! Expert Panel



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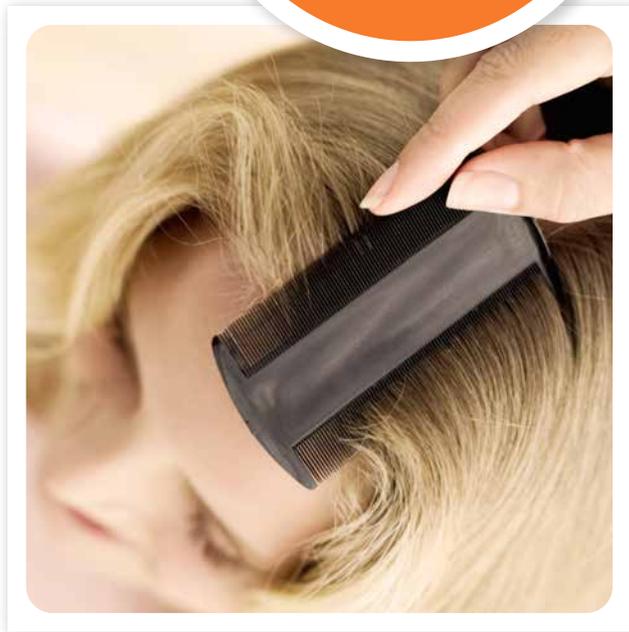
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Time to
Get Rid
of the Little
Buggers

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Head Lice Basics



It's important to know what you're looking for when you suspect a case of head lice, especially since they can spread quickly if not diagnosed and treated right away.

What should I know about head lice?

- Tiny, wingless insects
- Live close to the human scalp
- Feed on human blood
- Spread easily
- Not dangerous
- Move by crawling
- Cannot jump or fly
- Can only live for a day or two off a person's head

Who gets head lice?

Head lice can infest anyone, but are most common among preschool and elementary school children and the people who live with them. Girls tend to experience infestations more often than boys, which is likely due to sharing of combs, brushes and hair ties. Some people might think that kids and families with head lice are dirty, but head lice have nothing to do with the cleanliness of a person, or his or her environment.



Head Lice Basics



Symptoms usually take four to six weeks to develop after an initial infestation. In some first-time cases, symptoms may not develop at all. If you suspect a case of head lice, there are common symptoms that you can check for before contacting your healthcare provider.

Common head lice symptoms include:

- Itching (caused by lice bites)
- Tickling feeling on scalp
- Irritability or difficulty sleeping (because lice are more active in the dark)
- Head sores (caused by scratching; can sometimes become infected)



Did You Know? After a person's first head lice infestation, symptoms from subsequent cases usually develop in 48 hours or less.

- Wendy L. Wright



Finding Head Lice



What do head lice look like?

Head lice are hard to see since they're very small, move quickly and avoid light. When checking your child's head, you might spot:

- **Eggs (nits)**
 - About the same size as a knot in thread
 - Tear-drop shaped and often look like dandruff, but cannot be brushed off
 - Yellowish or white, or sometimes similar to hair color
- **Baby lice (nymphs)**
 - Smaller version of an adult
 - Grow to adult size in one to two weeks
- **Adult lice**
 - About the same size as a sesame seed
 - Tan to grayish-white, or sometimes similar to hair color
 - Have six legs

Make sure to check behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the head, since head lice and eggs are usually close to the scalp. If you think you see live nymphs or lice, you probably have an infestation. If you suspect an infestation, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider to get an accurate diagnosis and appropriate care.

Helpful tools for finding head lice

- A good light
- Fine-toothed louse (nit) comb
- Liquid, such as oil, water, or hair conditioner (may help slow down crawling lice)
- Magnifying glass



Lice at School



At any point, one to three percent of children in elementary school may have head lice. During an outbreak, the percentage of children may be as high as 25 percent. They are most commonly spread through direct contact with the hair of someone who has lice. This can happen almost anywhere, such as when children are playing sports, on playgrounds, at camp or during slumber parties, but the school nurse often plays an important role in detection. Head lice can also spread when kids share things like combs, brushes and hats, but it's less likely since adult lice need human blood to survive.

If you're dealing with head lice, talk to your school nurse, teachers and other trusted staff members to help you understand your school's policies. People often have negative reactions to a head lice diagnosis, including embarrassment, anxiety, anger, frustration and/or guilt. You should ask your school about policies to ensure your child does not fall behind on schoolwork and when your child will be allowed back to school. You should know your school nurse and other healthcare providers are available to help.

School policy basics

- Most schools enforce policies on when to send children home and when they can return to school
- Some schools have "no nit" policies that require all eggs to be removed from the hair before students can return to class
- Several organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) oppose "no nit" policies due to the fact that they often keep children out of school for an unnecessarily long length of time



***Did You Know?** Many experts no longer support "no nit" policies because they keep kids out of school too long. Your child's school nurse, teachers and other trusted staff members are the best resources for understanding your school and district policies.*

-Darline P. Robles



When you suspect a head lice infestation, it's important to talk to a healthcare provider to confirm a diagnosis and help determine the right solution for you and your family. When paired with expert information, treatments for head lice are generally safe and effective.

Commonly used treatment options include:

- **Over-the-counter (OTC)**
 - Products purchased in a store
 - Some studies show that certain OTCs may be effective less than 50% of the time, possibly due to misuse or treatment resistance
- **Prescription**
 - Medications prescribed by a healthcare provider and obtained at a pharmacy
 - Application times on the hair and scalp vary from 10 minutes to several hours
 - May be indicated for one or more uses
 - Some prescriptions do not require nit combing
- **Home remedies**
 - Include mayonnaise, olive oil, margarine, butter and similar substances
 - Not approved by the FDA for treatment of head lice
 - Do not have to meet safety and efficacy standards established for pharmaceutical products
 - There is no scientific evidence that they are effective treatments

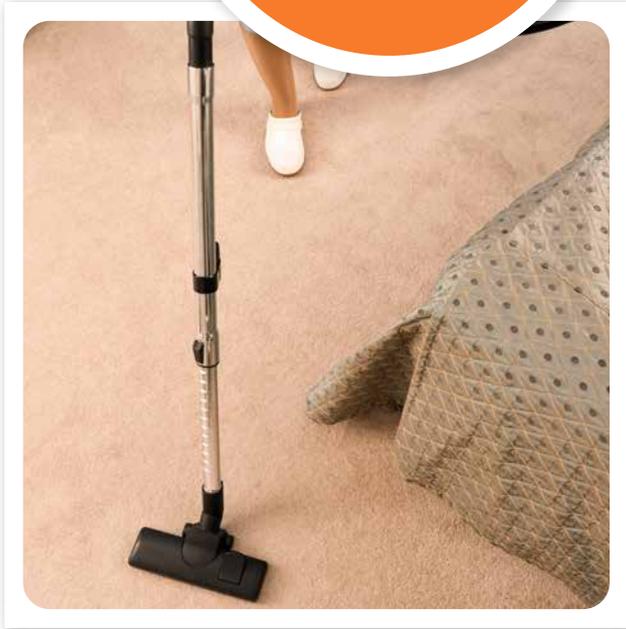


Did You Know? Although there are many anecdotal reports about home remedies for head lice, they are not FDA approved, so efficacy and safety cannot be confirmed.

-Dr. Nanette B. Silverberg



How to Lose Lice



Head lice can only live for a day or two off a person's head, so there is no need to spend a lot of time, effort or money on cleaning. But there are basic precautions you can take to ensure that your home is lice-free.

Tips for cleaning your home

- Vacuum floors and furniture
- Use hot water (130°F) and high heat to wash and dry bed linens and recently used clothes, hats and towels
- Seal non-washable items in a plastic bag for two weeks
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (130°F) for 5 to 10 minutes

If you cannot get rid of head lice, a healthcare provider, such as your family nurse or doctor, can help. They can share information about further treatment options and tips to prevent re-infestation.

For example, all household members and anyone in close contact with someone with head lice should be checked and treated, if appropriate. Healthcare providers can also provide ongoing support, since a re-infestation can be stressful for children, parents and caregivers alike.



Ask Your Healthcare Provider



List of Qs to ask your healthcare provider

- What treatment is best for my family?
- How effective is the treatment?
- How long will the treatment take?
- Do I need to nit comb when using this treatment?
- Are there any safety risks I should know about this treatment?
- What will this treatment cost?
- Have you recently seen families experience treatment-resistant head lice?
- What should I do if this treatment doesn't work the first time?



Did You Know? Healthcare providers play an important role in head lice diagnosis, treatment, prevention and education, and patients should visit their school nurse or family doctor to avoid misdiagnosis and learn about treatment options.

- Nancy Gottesman



- Inspect your child's hair and scalp**
- Call your healthcare provider** – talk to your healthcare provider to confirm diagnosis and discuss treatment options (consider safety, effectiveness, ease of use and cost)
- Tell your school** (utilize your school nurse as a resource)
- Follow treatment directions closely**
- Check all household members**
- Take precautions**
- Clean your home**
- Move on!**



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HOME

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