



Head Lice | Survival guide



How did my child get lice?

Head lice spread through direct contact. They cannot hop, jump, swim, or fly.

School students spend a lot of time in close contact with each other, and lice move from one head to the next.

They can also temporarily live on combs, hairbrushes, hats, hair ties, as well as cushions and soft furniture.

Getting lice has nothing to do with hygiene – you could be washing your child's hair every night, and they can still get lice.



What are lice?

Head lice are small insects that live on human heads and feed on small amounts of blood.

They can only live for a short time away from a person's head. They don't live anywhere else on the body, or on other animals.

Head lice are hard to see because they are small, can hide in the hair, and come in various shades of brown and grey.

Adult head lice are 1–3 mm long, and the eggs (often called nits) are usually pale in colour and about 1 mm in size.

Adult head lice lay eggs/nits on the hair, usually within 5 mm of the scalp.

See **Head Lice** on SchoolDocs for information about head lice management and treatment.



Prevention

Don't share hats, brushes/combs, hair accessories, or other personal items.

Brush hair regularly. Brushing or combing can remove lice before they can lay eggs.

Tie up long hair to prevent lice from spreading.

Don't hang hats, coats, and scarves too close together at school.

Check your child's hair at least once a week, especially if you know lice have been detected on others in the class.

Put pillows, bed linens, and stuffed animals in the dryer on high heat for 30 minutes to kill lice and eggs.



Treatment

The best method for getting rid of lice is combing. Use a fine-toothed metal comb with long teeth.

Follow these steps:

- 1. Comb through hair** with a regular comb or brush to remove any tangles.
- 2. Cover the hair with conditioner** from roots to tips.
- 3. Separate hair into small sections, then comb from root to tip** with the metal, fine-toothed comb. Deposit any lice or eggs in the comb into a bowl of hot, soapy water.
- 4. Comb each section of hair twice.**
- 5. Repeat these steps every 2–3 days**, until you haven't found any lice or eggs for 10 days.



Tips

- Comb under a bright light – it's easier to spot lice.
- Head lice shampoos and lotions are available from the chemist, but you must follow the instructions carefully. Some lice have become resistant to these chemicals due to overuse.
- Never use chemicals such as fly spray, flea spray, or kerosene. It's unnecessary and can cause serious harm.