



Head lice are actually no bigger than sesame seeds.

DON'T POUT— Get the Lice Out!

Don't let lice make your head their home!

These wingless, six-legged insects may be no bigger than sesame seeds, but they live large once on the human head. Lice hide in areas where they can lay their nits, or eggs, without being easily discovered. And once they settle in, they bite the scalp in search of the human blood that keeps them alive.

Head lice are often diagnosed by locating their nits. Nits have a smooth, oval shape and are attached, at an angle, to hair shafts. They are never irregular or fuzzy. Sometimes, people confuse nits with dandruff and other hair debris. That's why it is important to know what you're looking for.

What happens when you get lice?

- You get a tickling feeling, as if something is crawling in your hair.
- You have sores on the scalp caused by scratching.
- You feel irritable.
- You experience regular to constant itching from an allergic reaction to bites.

How to treat head lice:

1. Remove all clothing from the waist up.
2. Use an over-the-counter lice treatment. Non-pesticide treatments are available—ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.
3. Apply the lice treatment, carefully following label instructions.
4. **Pin hair into sections using hair clips, and use a fine-tooth nit comb to remove all lice and nits from hair. A vinegar/water solution (1 cup vinegar and 1 cup water) used to dampen the hair may help loosen the nits.**
5. *Do not use a cream rinse, conditioner, or combination shampoo/conditioner before using lice medicine and for at least two days following treatment.*
6. Change into clean clothing after treatment.
7. Recheck after eight to 12 hours. If slow-moving lice are found, the treatment is working. If no dead lice are found and the lice are as active as before, the treatment might not be working. See your doctor for a different treatment, and follow his or her instructions closely.
8. After the first treatment, comb hair and check for and remove any remaining nits and/or lice. Repeat this step every day for 12 to 14 days.
9. Mark a calendar to show the first day of treatment. Chart your lice-removal progress for 12 to 14 days.
10. If you find live lice or nits on the seventh day, re-treat with lice medication.
11. Continue to check for two to three weeks until you are sure all lice and nits are gone!

How to clean the environment:

- Treatment of the home with an insecticide is not required or recommended.
- To kill lice and nits, wash all your clothing and bedding used during the two days before the head lice or nits were discovered. Use the hot water cycle on the washing machine, and dry the clothing on the hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.
- Wash all combs and brushes in very hot, soapy water, or soak them in rubbing alcohol for one hour. You can also wash them in the dishwasher.
- Vacuum car seats, carpet, and furniture that have been exposed, paying close attention to headrests.
- Store pillows, stuffed animals, comforters, and other items that cannot be washed in sealed plastic bags for two weeks.

*If you or someone in your family has lice, remember: **It is important to clean your environment, but it is more important to remove all lice and nits from the head.***

Interesting facts about head lice and nits:

- Head lice tend to prefer areas behind the ears and near the neckline at the back of the head.
- Head lice need human blood to live.
- Head lice are insects that crawl. They can't hop, jump, or fly!
- Head lice can live only one to two days once removed from the human head.
- It takes seven to 10 days for a nit to hatch.

Resources for information on head lice:

- Centers for Disease Control—Division of Parasitic Diseases
www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/headlice/factsbt_head_lice.htm
- American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/policy/0203.html
- University of Kentucky Entomology Department
www.uky.edu/Agriculture/Entomology/entfacts/struct/ef607.htm
- Kentucky Cabinet for Health Services—Department for Public Health
<http://chs.state.ky.us/publichealth/head%5Fllice.htm>
- National Pediculosis Association
www.headlice.org

Developed by:

Health Education through Extension Leadership (HEEL) Program
Zaida Belendez, ND, RN, Extension Health Specialist
Laura John, Extension Health Associate



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The recommendations in this educational fact sheet are not intended for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about head lice or the treatment of head lice, contact your health care provider.