

LUCKY LADY LICE REMOVAL

Frequently Asked Questions: Dealing with Lice

What are head lice?

- Head lice are insect parasites that are found on human heads. The word lice is plural for louse.
- Head lice are spread by personal contact or the sharing of combs, brushes, caps, and other clothing.
- Head lice are a common problem with preschool and schoolchildren.
- Head lice cause a tickling feeling of something moving in the hair, itching, and sores on the head.
- The affected individual, family members also infected, and the home all should be treated.
- Remember: one head louse + one head louse = two head lice = the beginning of a head-lice infection.
- Very young children should be evaluated by a health-care professional before beginning medications.

How do I know that I have lice?

Common signs and symptoms of head lice may include:

- Intense itching. An allergic reaction to the saliva that lice inject during feeding may result in itchy red bumps on your scalp, neck and shoulders. Some people, particularly if this is their first infestation, don't experience itching.
- Adult lice on scalp. The most common spots to find adult lice are behind your ears and along the back of your neck. Lice are tiny, about the size of a strawberry seed, but they can be up to 1/8 inch (3 millimeters) in size. Their color is a translucent, light grey.
- Lice eggs (nits) on hair shafts. Nits resemble tiny pussy willow buds. Nits can be mistaken for dandruff, but unlike dandruff, they can't be easily brushed out of hair. Nits range in color from amber to dark brown. It is difficult to tell if a nit contains a live louse or if the louse has already hatched.

What should I do to get rid of head lice?

You must treat: (1) the home: (2) the non-home environment, and (3) the head. **Getting rid of lice is not done with a "magic bullet."** It is a process that takes time, determination, and persistence. **Expect to be dealing with lice for several weeks or more.**

1. Treatment of the home

- Disinfect all combs and brushes by soaking in hot water (130 degrees F) for at least 15 minutes.
- Machine wash all clothing, towels, bed linens (especially pillow cases), blankets, etc. that have been used in the last 48 hours in hot water, and dry for at least 30 minutes on the highest heat cycle of your clothes dryer. If items can't be washed send them to the dry cleaner. * As an added precaution dry all bedding for 30 minutes on high heat. Do this daily for the next 2 weeks.
- Store all other exposed items that cannot be machine-washed (like stuffed animals and dolls) in tightly sealed plastic bags for two weeks. Since lice cannot live outside the body for any longer than this time period, any remaining lice or nits will die.
- Vacuum any affected areas such as rugs, furniture and mattresses, and discard the vacuum bag.

2. Treatment of the non-home environment (and talking with your children):

- It is not your child's fault they have caught the head lice, so please reassure your child that getting lice happens to people all the time. Lice infection is the 2nd most common childhood infection.
- Please make sure that there are good communication links between home and all the settings your child attends, as an outbreak of head lice can quickly become widespread.
- There are reports that head lice can live off of the head for up to 48 hours once it has left the

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scalp, and while they move very slowly during this time, there is a chance that they could be transferred to other scalps by the following methods:

- ❖ Sharing hats or other head garments, as well as scarves or neck gear
- ❖ Hair brushes and combs
- ❖ Hair drying towels
- ❖ Sharing dress up clothes

3. Treatment of the head

a. Chemical Approach (Not-recommended): Virtually all commercial preparations—both over-the-counter and prescription treatments—rely on poisons as the means of attempting to eradicate lice. The treatments may contain *pyrethrins*, *permethrins*, *lindane*, or *malathion*. We do not recommend them for three reasons: (1) their efficacy has been reduced since introduction; scientists speculate that lice are developing immunities to the poisons; (2) banned in many countries, these poisons may cause burning or severe systemic reaction when used on children. Patients tend to overuse them, and a burned or damaged scalp may result; (3) they can be very expensive. **If you insist upon using these products, follow the manufacturer's directions carefully and do not over-treat!**

b. Natural Olive Oil Treatment Process with Manual Nitpicking (Recommended by Lucky Lady!): Anyone can use this process; it is definitely a do-it-yourself approach! It is also gentle on the scalp and toxin-free. (In rare cases it is possible for someone to have an olive oil allergy.) The process requires about 20 days and 5 treatment sessions; the treatment sessions are done every four days. This four day cycle aligns with the reproductive cycle of the lice. Any nits missed during one treatment are covered by the next treatment. It has been our general experience that patients who follow the process and comply with the procedure—while dealing with the home and non-home environments—will find themselves free of lice.

Each treatment session consist of the following:

1. Saturating the hair with olive oil and letting it set for at least two hours, covered with a shower cap.
2. Combing the oil and any live lice (and possibly some nits) out with a metal lice comb.
3. Preparing for dry picking by thoroughly washing and drying the hair using normal approach.
4. Thoroughly dry picking the hair to remove any visible nits.

Expect to spend about three hours doing this the first time, depending on the thickness of the hair, the patience of the nitpicker and the child, and the degree of infestation. Each subsequent treatment should go faster as you get better and the number of lice and nits decreases.

Please visit our website below to get a link to a handout with greater detail about the process. Should you not be comfortable with doing it yourself, or if you need assistance, Lucky Lady is available to help you with treatments or "inspection of a head" for a reasonable fee.

When may my child return to school?

Each school sets their own policy. Consult with your principal. It is our opinion that if a person has started treatment, addresses the home environment, and counsels the child about lice-preventive behavior at school, then a child is best served by keeping them in school. Getting rid of lice is a process that takes time. **The important thing is to focus on the head and keep up with the treatment plan.**

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