

# HEAD LICE (Pediculosis)



**Pediculosis** is the medical term for head lice, which are tiny insects that live in human hair. Lice lay their eggs, which are called **nits**, on the hair shaft. When the eggs hatch, the babies are called **nymphs**. A nymph grows into a **louse**; lice are the plural of louse. They are not dangerous, but their bites cause itching and irritation on the scalp, which often leads to infection.

Head lice are very common, especially among kids, and they are more common in public places rather than in someone's home. In fact, almost all kids that get lice, get them at places like schools, camps, churches, or after-school programs. You can get head lice by wearing infested hats, clothing, or by using combs or brushes that are infested. You can also get head lice by laying on pillows, blankets, carpet, or stuffed animals that are infested. They can also be transferred by personal contact.



## How To Avoid HEAD LICE



The best way to avoid head lice is to avoid getting near things that could possibly be infested. Do not play with dress up clothes if they haven't been washed since the last time someone wore them. Don't borrow combs, brushes, hats, or hair accessories. Don't share sports equipment, and don't lie on blankets or pillows that have not been washed.

## Diagnosing and Treating HEAD LICE



You can diagnose or find out if you have lice by having an adult look very carefully at your scalp. Lice are about the size of a sesame seed and can change color to blend in with your hair, so they are often hard to see. Another way to test for lice is to make a part in the hair and place a piece of clear tape along the part. If you have lice, the nits, or eggs, will adhere or stick to the tape.

If you get lice, you should have an adult treat it as soon as possible. You can't treat lice by yourself. The most common method of treatment is an over-the-counter medication that kills head lice. The treatment also comes with a comb. The medication is applied to the hair, and after the recommended amount of time, the dead lice and nits can be combed out of the hair. In most cases, an over-the-counter medication works, but if it doesn't work you should see your physician.

## Activities



**MATH** There are several shampoos and treatments available to treat head lice. If the price for the products ranges from \$6.00 to \$13.00, how much money can you save if you buy the product that costs the least amount of money versus the product that costs the most? If one product's price is \$4.00 more than the least expensive product, how much does the product cost?

**PROBLEM SOLVING** Think of other ways you spread germs. Compile a class poster that shows ways to prevent the spread of germs, lice, or other illnesses.

**READING** Alphabetize the following words from the article:

pediculosis, lice, eggs, nits, hair, comb, adult

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

**HOME CONNECTION** When one family member gets lice, other family members frequently get it too. As a family, discuss ways that you can prevent the spread of lice, germs, or illnesses in your home. Share some of your ideas with your classmates.



### Discussion Questions

What would you say to a friend that wanted to borrow your hairbrush or comb?

If someone gave you a secondhand hat, what could you do to make sure it was safe to wear?