

# Head Lice Fact Sheet

## What is it?

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Head lice are small insects that live in your hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes. They need to eat your blood to survive, and live close to your scalp. These insects don't spread any known diseases. School-aged children have a high chance of getting head lice.



## How does it spread?

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Good news: lice can't jump or fly. They just crawl. You can get lice when you:

- Have head-to-head contact with someone who has lice.
- Share clothing, like hats or scarves, with someone who has lice.
- Use the same comb, brush, or towel as a person with lice.
- Lie down on the same couch, bed, or pillow as a person with lice.



Remember, anyone can get these insects in their hair. Having head lice is not a sign of poor hygiene or being unclean.

## How do I know if I have it?

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You can get lice and not know it. Most people do get itchy with lice. If you have lice, you may have these symptoms:

- Feel tickles on your head or that something is there.
- Have trouble sleeping because lice move around in the dark.
- Scratch your head until you get sores. These sores can get infected.
- See the lice in your hair. They look like specks or small, white insects.



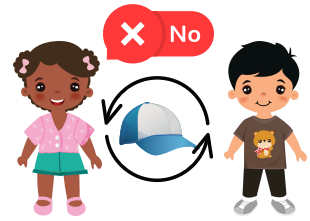
# How can I protect myself?

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You can protect yourself from lice by keeping your stuff to yourself.

**Make sure you don't:**

- Touch your head to another person's head.
- Share clothing like hats, scarves, or jackets.
- Use a person's comb, brush, or towel.
- Lie down on the same bed, couch, or pillow as a person with lice.



# How should I take care of myself or someone who has Head Lice?

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There are medicines you can buy at the store to treat lice. Follow the instructions on the medicine box closely. After using the medicine, don't re-wash your hair for 1-2 days. Some treatment tips include:

- If a few live lice are still found 8-12 hours after treatment, do not retreat. Comb dead and any live lice out of the hair with a fine-toothed nit comb.
- Comb your hair every 2-3 days for 2-3 weeks to remove any lice you may have not seen.



To make sure you don't get lice again, you will need to:

- Machine wash on hot (130°F) and dry any items you used during the 2 days before treatment. This could be clothes, pillowcases, sheets, or bedspreads.
- Vacuum the floor, couch, and any other furniture you sat on.
- Soak your combs and brushes in hot water (130°F) for 5-10 minutes.

# When should I call a doctor?

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Most people don't need to see a doctor for lice, but you should contact your doctor if you still have lice after a full treatment. Your doctor may switch you to a stronger medicine like Ivermectin.



To learn more, visit the Head Lice webpage at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).