

Frequently Asked Questions

GENERAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HEAD LICE

1) How do you get head lice?

Head lice spread through close contact, or through shared personal items, such as hats, helmets, combs, pillows, “nap mats,” chairs, bedding, and radio earphones.

2) Can head lice fly?

No. Head lice are wingless insects that can’t jump or fly, but they can crawl at a rate of 12 inches per minute.

3) Do head lice indicate that a person is dirty?

No. Anyone can get head lice. Contrary to popular myth, you don’t get head lice because of poor personal hygiene. In fact, head lice prefer clean hair.

4) Do head lice transmit dangerous diseases?

No. Head lice aren’t known to carry disease.

5) How can I tell if my child has head lice?

For most people, the most common symptom of head lice is intense itching. However, itching is not always present. You should also look for red marks on the scalp and neck, and check the head for lice and nits.

6) What do head lice look like?

Head lice are tiny and brown, and the largest are the size of a sesame seed. Head lice may be hard to locate because they avoid light.

7) Do pets carry human head lice?

No. Head lice (*humanus pediculus capitis*) is exclusively a human disease. However, a louse can be transmitted to a pet who, in turn, can transmit it back to the family. Head lice do not live off animals, they feed only on human blood.

8) How do head lice grow?

Female head lice lay approximately eight eggs a day. The eggs are called nits and usually hatch in seven to 14 days.

9) What do nits look like?

Viable nits are tiny, whitish ovals. They are firmly glued to the hair shaft, most often near the scalp.

10) Are head lice limited to children?

No. You can get head lice at any age, though it is most common for children between the ages of five and twelve.

11) Are nits the same as dandruff?

No. Nits might be mistaken for dandruff, but unlike dandruff, nits can’t be brushed off, or removed by normal shampooing and washing.