Parent Guide

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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Head lice are very common in young children and can be itchy and irritating. Learn how to recognise, prevent and treat head lice at home with this top tips guide for parents.

What is the focus of this resource?

- Head Lice
- Top Tips
- Hair Care

Further Ideas and Suggestions

Head to our **Top Tips for Parents** category for more helpful advice and guidance regarding common parenting concerns. Learn about common infections and illnesses in children with this easy-to-read **guide**. Or, encourage restful sleep with our **Top Tips to Getting a Good Sleep**.

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Top Tips for Dealing with Head Lice at Home

Head lice are a common occurrence in children. They can be itchy and irritating but are not dangerous or a sign of dirty hair. You can easily treat head lice at home - the key is to catch them quickly and be thorough in your removal of the lice. Read on for more top tips on how to deal with head lice at home.

1 Know How Head Lice Spread

Knowing how head lice spread is important if you wish to prevent your child from catching head lice or spreading them if they have them.

Head lice move from head to head by crawling. They do not jump and they do not live on the fur of pets. Therefore, in order for your child to catch head lice, they must have their head very close to or touching the head of the person carrying the head lice.

Rarely, head lice can spread from people sharing haircare tools, such as hairbrushes or hair accessories.

2 Preventing Head Lice

While it is not possible to ensure that your child avoids head lice, there are some things that you can do to reduce the chances of your child catching head lice.

- Tie up long hair so your child's hair is less likely to come into contact with the hair of someone carrying head lice.
- Don't share hats, hair brushes, hair accessories and other items that touch a child's hair.
- Wash any items that may have come into contact with a person with head lice.
- Avoid head-to-head contact, especially if you know there is an outbreak of head lice at your child's school or childcare setting.



3 Checking for Head Lice

Discovering head lice early makes it easier to remove them quickly and successfully. The best way to check is when your child's hair is wet. Apply conditioner to your child's hair and run a fine tooth comb or special nit comb through their hair. Look for signs of:

- Head lice eggs (nits), which are brown or white and may look like dandruff near the roots of your child's hair.
- Live head lice, which are tan-coloured and about 3mm long.

It is easiest to spot head lice along the hairline, such as at the back of the neck or behind the ears.

If your child has an itchy scalp or has a rash on their scalp or the back of their neck, it is a good idea to check for head lice.

4 Containing the Head Lice

If you've discovered that your child has head lice, your first step should be to reduce the risk of the head lice spreading. To do this, prevent family members from sharing items that touch the head, tie up hair and encourage siblings to not touch heads. You could also let your child's school or childcare setting know.

It is also a good idea to check the hair of all members of your household as the head lice may have already spread.

5 Removing Head Lice: Wet Combing

You should treat head lice as soon as you spot them. You can remove head lice and nits (the eggs) by wet combing.

- Wash your child's hair as normal.
- Apply plenty of conditioner.
- Use a special fine-toothed comb to comb through your child's hair from roots to tips.
- Remove eggs and live head lice. If you don't remove the eggs then there is a strong chance that they will hatch and the cycle will continue.
- Repeat every 4 to 5 days until the head lice have gone.

6 Removing Head Lice: Medicated Lotions and Sprays

If, after wet combing, the head lice persist, you can try special medicated lotions and sprays that kill the head lice. You can get these pharmacies, supermarkets and online but it may be a good idea to speak to a pharmacist or carefully read the pack first to ensure the product is suitable for your child.



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