

Bruce P. Robinson, MD, FAAD

Diplomate American Board of Dermatology
121 East 60th Street, Second Floor
New York, New York 10022
Website: www.BruceRobinsonMD.com
Tele: (212) 750 - 7121
Email: info@brucerobinsonmd.com

When Your Child Comes Home With Head Lice

Don't Panic! Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with cleanliness. Head lice only survive on humans and do not affect family pets.

How Do We Get Head Lice? When children/adults are in close contact with each other, it is easy to pass along head lice. Shared hats, helmets, clothing, combs, brushes, headbands, hair ties, headrest, pillows, linens, towels, backpacks, duffels and other personal articles are perfect vehicles to transfer lice from one person to another.

What To Look For? The adult head louse has six legs and is about the size of a sesame seed. Descriptions of their color vary, but generally they range from beige to gray and may become considerably darker when they feed. You can spot them most easily in the areas behind the ears and along the hairline on the back of the neck. Lice are often difficult to see with the naked eye. **Diagnosis** is generally made when nits (lice eggs), are seen fastened to the hair shaft. Nits (eggs) are teardrop in shape and are fastened to the hair shaft. They seem "glued" to the hair and cannot be brushed or combed off like dandruff. A child who is scratching his/her head often is another telltale sign.

The Problem Can Be Easily Eliminated By Simply Following These Instructions:

1. **Examine** your child's head, look for "live" lice directly on the scalp by separating the hair into sections, looking at the top, sides and back of the scalp, behind the ears and at the hairline on the back of the neck. This can be done during showers or baths or when combing/styling their hair.
2. **If You Spot Something Suspicious** - Check Other Family Members.
3. **Seek Treatment!** Your Physician can prescribe an effective pediculicide product. Follow the directions exactly as prescribed. When used as



directed, it will be very effective at killing head lice. Because 20-30% of the eggs remain viable after treatment, a second treatment 7-10 days later is absolutely necessary to kill newly emerged lice hatched from eggs that survived the first treatment.

4. **Remove!** No pediculicide product kills all the eggs. To prevent the eggs from hatching and having a re-infestation it is important to remove the nits (eggs). After treatment with the pediculicide product help loosen the nits by applying mineral or Rosemary oil to the hair at bedtime. You may cover the head with a shower cap when sleeping to avoid oil from getting on linens or pillows. In the a.m. remove all traces of the nits (eggs) with a special fine toothed, "nit comb". The nits will be easier to loosen from the hair shaft after sleeping with the oil on the hair.
5. **Wash All Clothing, Bed Linens, Towels, and Outerwear in HOT water and dry on hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.** Items that cannot be safely washed, such as stuffed animals, should be dry cleaned or stored in a sealed plastic bag for two weeks. This is because adult lice can survive for 48-55 hours at room temperature without a host.
6. **Clean Combs, Brushes, Hair Ties, and Headbands In HOT Soapy Water. Water should be at least 130 degrees F** and it is advisable to let soak for at least 10 minutes.
7. **Vacuum EVERYWHERE Daily** to make sure your home and cars "upholstered surfaces" (cloth surfaces) are free of lice. Vacuum carpets, upholstered furniture, pillows, mattresses and anything that may hold lice. Do a thorough job and discard vacuum bags promptly.
8. **Please Inform The Parents** of your child's playmates and friends with whom you carpool or play with so that they may check their children's heads to prevent re-infecting your child.

Prevention:

1. **Do Not Share Brushes, Combs, Hair Ties, Headbands, Hats or Pillows** with family members or with friends i.e. at sleepovers, school and during sports.
2. **Keep Brushes, Combs and hair accessories in a sealed Ziploc Bag.** Backpacks should also be stored in large garbage bags during school outbreaks of lice.
3. **Keep Hair Back, Braided or in a Pony Tail.**
4. **Do Periodic Lice Checks,** especially after traveling, when your child has had an exposure or is attending camp or school.
5. **If There Has Been An Exposure** be on the alert for at least 7-14 days. To prevent an infestation use products with one of the following: **Tea Tree Oil, Coconut Oil, Menthol, Eucalyptus, Lavender or Rosemary Oil. (i.e. Fairy Tales Repel Products),** available over the counter and on-line. Lice dislike the smell of these fragrant oils and the oils prevent the nits from attaching to the hair shaft.