



Head lice

Head lice are tiny insects that feed on blood from the human scalp. Head lice usually affect children but it can also affect adults. The insects usually spread through direct transfer from the hair of one person to the hair of another person.

Having head lice isn't a sign of poor personal hygiene or an unclean living environment. Head lice don't carry bacterial or viral diseases.

Symptoms:

- **Itching.** The most common symptom of head lice is itching on the scalp, neck and ears. When a person has head lice for the first time, itching may not occur for 4 to 6 weeks.
- **Lice on scalp.** You may be able to see the lice, but they're often hard to spot because they're small, avoid light and move quickly.
- **Lice eggs (nits) on hair shafts.** Nits stick to hair shafts and may be hard to see because they're very tiny. They're easiest to spot around the ears and the hairline of the neck. Empty nits may be easier to spot because they're lighter in color and further from the scalp. However, the presence of nits doesn't mean there are live lice.
- **Sores on the scalp, neck and shoulders.** Scratching can lead to small, red bumps that may sometimes get infected with bacteria.

Treatment:

Your doctor will likely recommend a medication available without a prescription that kills lice and some of the nits. These medications may not kill recently laid eggs. Therefore, an appropriately timed second treatment is usually necessary to kill nymphs after they hatch but before they become adult lice.



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