

Lice in the Classroom: Dispelling Myths & Taking Positive Action

Head lice: The basics

- ▶ Head lice have been pestering humans since ancient times - nit combs & desiccated lice have been found on Egyptian mummies.
- ▶ Lice can't jump or fly; they move by grasping the hair shaft & crawling.
- ▶ Lice are annoying & pesky, but they aren't a health hazard & don't spread disease.
- ▶ The itching associated with lice is caused by an allergic reaction to their saliva, the same reason mosquito bites itch.



Who gets head lice, and how?



- ▶ There are as many as 12MM cases in the US each year - second most prevalent childhood health concern.
- ▶ Lice don't discriminate; they're not a sign of poor hygiene or a dirty household.
- ▶ Recurrent cases are often due to transmission between family members at home.
- ▶ They're spread by direct head-to-head contact & are quick crawlers in the hair.

How do you spot lice?

- ▶ Early detection is key to preventing spread. School nurses & teachers are often the first to detect lice.
- ▶ Signs & symptoms include:
 - ▶ Excessive scratching
 - ▶ A tickling feeling
 - ▶ An irritated scalp
- ▶ But not everyone experiences these symptoms.
 - ▶ And itching symptoms can take 4-6 weeks to manifest the first time a person gets lice.



What do lice look like?

Lice are difficult to spot. They are:

- ▶ about the size of a sesame seed,
- ▶ & often camouflaged by hair color.



Nits can be easier to see, especially with a magnifying lens. They are:

- ▶ about the size of a poppy seed,
- ▶ yellow or white in color,
- ▶ & can't be brushed off, unlike dirt or dandruff.

What are the treatment options?

<p>Over-the-counter solutions:</p> <p>The first stop for many families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditional pesticide-based products, now facing resistance issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Pyrethrins, permethrin• Newer, pesticide-free options are effective against these super lice & safe for repeat use<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Natrum muriaticum, dimethicone
<p>Prescription medications</p>	<p>Obtained through a health care provider, often pesticide based</p>
<p>Manual removal</p>	<p>Effective when done correctly, but is time consuming</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Some parents opt for lice clinics to handle the nit picking
<p>Natural & home remedies</p>	<p>Mayo, essential oils, almond/olive oil, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Useful as combing facilitators➤ Not FDA regulated or scientifically proven effective

“Ideally lice treatment should be safe, free of toxic chemicals, easy to get without a prescription, easy to use, effective & affordable.”

-American Academy of Pediatrics

Easy tips to reduce risk

- ▶ **No sharing.** Remind kids to keep belongings that touch their heads to themselves.
- ▶ **Give them space.** Tell kids not to share cubbies or lockers with friends.
- ▶ **Play smarter.** Encourage kids to avoid games that involve head-to-head contact.
- ▶ **Keep alert.** If you notice a child with symptoms, alert your school nurse or administrator.



Cleaning the home

The risk of getting lice from carpet & furniture is low:

- ▶ Lice die within 1-2 days if they're off the head & can't feed.
- ▶ Nits can't hatch without the warmth of the head.

Many parents still want to clean the home after treatment. Here's where to focus:

- ▶ Machine-washable items: Wash all clothing, bedding & other washable items in hot water* & dry on high heat for 20 min.
- ▶ Items you can vacuum: Vacuum furniture, carpets, rugs, etc.; empty the canister or dispose of the bag right away.
- ▶ Items worn or used on the head: Soak brushes, combs & hair accessories in hot* soapy water for 10 min. to disinfect them.

*At least 130°F

Use of household sprays & fogs could be dangerous & is discouraged by the CDC. However, families may want to consider a pesticide-free home cleaning aid.

Supporting kids and families

Have no fear

- ▶ School transmission is rare; lice are brought into the classroom from the community.
- ▶ Lice are a nuisance but not a health hazard.



Talk it out

- ▶ Reassure parents: up to 12MM cases/year means lice are part of childhood.
- ▶ Help reduce stigma - share information (w/kids, parents & peers!).
- ▶ Direct families to additional resources.
- ▶ Encourage parents to check the whole family for 2 weeks.

But maintain privacy

- ▶ Kids & parents may feel embarrassed.
- ▶ Help prevent ostracism by classmates & others.

References

The information in this presentation was compiled from the following sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/gen_info/faqs.html
- <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/prevent.html>

Mayo Clinic

- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/head-lice/basics/definition/con-20030792>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/head-lice/basics/symptoms/con-20030792>

Journal of Medical Entomology

- Y. K. Mumcuoglu and J. Zias, 'Head lice, *Pediculus humanus capitis* (Anoplura: Pediculidae) from hair combs excavated in Israel and dated from the first century B.C. to the eighth century A.D.' *Journal of Medical Entomology* 25 (1988), 545-7.)
- K. J. Gellatly, et. al., 'Expansion of the Knockdown Resistance Frequency Map for Human Head Lice (Phthiraptera: Pediculidae) in the United States Using Quantitative Sequencing' *Journal of Medical Entomology* (2016)

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- <http://www.aappublications.org/news/2016/04/11/Lice041116>

Pediatric Nursing

- <https://www.pediatricnursing.net/ce/2016/article4005226235.pdf>

Vamousse

- <http://vamousselice.com/lice-info/>

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Vamousse is dedicated to reducing the use of pesticides by providing a full range of safe, effective and pesticide-free head lice solutions for the family and home.