



# Head Lice: An Itchy Situation

Head lice can be an uncomfortable problem. Yet despite the discomfort they cause, lice are not considered a disease nor do lice carry disease. They are merely a nuisance. Head lice occur in all socioeconomic groups and cultures and do not represent poor hygiene.

## Spotting Head Lice

Close inspection with a magnifying glass will usually reveal live lice or lice nits or eggs, which appear as dandruff-like spots that are white-gray in color. The lice themselves are more difficult to find. The eggs will be “glued” to the hair shaft, most commonly at the nape of the neck. The scalp may appear irritated with redness and possibly scabs from scratching.

## Treating Lice

- Treat the lice using a special shampoo or lotion sold in most grocery/drug stores. A nit comb is commonly included with the shampoo/lotion and should be used for the most effective treatment.
- Prescription methods are available if the over the counter methods are not sufficient.
- Children under 2 should only be treated with the lotion form or prescription method.
- Home remedies, such as mayonnaise on the child’s head, are not proven effective.



## Cleaning Your Child Care

- Do **NOT** spray pesticides. Doing so is not effective and can pose a significant health risk.
- Using a vacuum is one of the best ways to rid areas of lice. Consider vacuuming or laundering plush toys, bedding, upholstered furniture, draperies, and clothing.
- Heat is effective. Wash in hot water on a hot cycle or using a hot cycle in the dryer, at least 130° F for 20 minutes.

## Exclusion

Children do **not** need to be excluded from activities etc. as long as they can maintain personal space. Send them home at the end of the day and notify their parents that they must be treated and be free of **LIVE** lice before returning. Children may return with “nits”. These egg-sacs should be non-viable after treatment. They are difficult to remove and do not pose any risk.

## Talking Points for Parents

- Emphasize that no one is to blame; young children frequently experience head lice.
- Discuss proper use of the lice treatment;
  - Children may need another treatment 7-10 days after the 1st
  - Using a nit comb to remove the lice and nits is the most effective.
- Give parents cleaning tips for their home to prevent further infestations.

## Other Things to Remember

- Lice are not life threatening; infected children may attend child care as long as precautions are taken to prevent spreading lice to others.
- **Prevention is easier than treatment.**
  - Do not share comb or hats
  - Separate children’s coats and bedding so they are not touching
  - Wash bedding/dress up clothes regularly
- Use responsible treatment methods.

## Resources:

Download an exclusion/inclusion of ill children policy and other health and safety policies and forms: <http://ebooks.aap.org/product/managing-infectious-diseases-in-child-care-schools>  
American Academy of Pediatrics: [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) or 800-433-9016  
Indiana State Board of Health’s communicable diseases page: <http://www.in.gov/isdh/20209.htm>  
\*Information consistent with Caring for Our Children 2012: <http://nrckids.org>