



FACTS ABOUT HEAD LICE

Head Lice...

- Are **NOT** able to jump, fly or swim.
- Are **NOT** dangerous but are contagious (and annoying).
- Are **NOT** signs of unwashed or unclean hair. They thrive on clean hair, greasy hair, unwashed hair - they are NOT fussy.
- Do **NOT** live on pets.
- Are able to live in your house (sofa, carpet, furniture, beds).
- Are **NOT** like bed bugs, they do **NOT** burrow and hibernate.
- Need blood to live, if they do **NOT** get food, they perish within 48 hours (depending on temperatures it may be quicker).
- Are **NOT** always detected by an itchy head as you only itch if you are allergic to their saliva when they bite you.

INFORMATION:

- Children who are being treated for head lice can still attend school.
- There is no evidence that head lice have a preference for either clean or dirty hair.
- There is no need to treat (wash at high temperature or fumigate) clothing or bedding that has been in contact with lice, as the lifespan of a head louse is very short (1-2 days) once it is detached from a human head.
- Essential oil-based treatments (tea tree etc.) and herbal treatments are not recommended due to the lack of good-quality evidence on their safety and efficacy.
- It is not possible to prevent head lice infestation. Children of primary school age should be examined regularly at home (using a detection comb) to identify infestation early.

NitNOT

Head lice eggs are hard to see and often confused for dandruff. Nits can be found at the base of the hair, the nape of the neck and above the ears. They like it where it is warm.

Nits are the shells left behind after the nymph has hatched (the nymph is a baby louse). The shells stay attached to the head and will only go when either removed manually or the hair is cut.

Sometimes, on hair which is not tied back, you can roughly estimate the length of the infestation depending on where the egg is located on the hair shaft - the farther down, the longer they have been at home in the hair. With longer hair that is tied back this is not the case.

When a nymph emerges, it is not able to lay eggs. At around ten days it becomes a fertile louse and can lay up to approx 100 eggs in its lifetime. The adult louse has six legs, with claws at the front to hold on to the hair. It is a translucent, grey/light brown colour. Because it is translucent it can look darker or lighter depending on the colour of the hair of the host, making it very difficult to see. A fertile louse lays up to eight to ten eggs a day for up to 30 days. This is how an infestation soon snowballs, as those eggs multiply at the same rate and within a month there can be over two thousand lice in the hair.

Lice ONLY feed on blood, by piercing the head and using their saliva to stop the blood congealing. At this point, if you are allergic to the saliva, the head will start to itch. If you are not allergic, the other symptom may be small bite marks around the ears, neck and scalp.

Lice Will Live In Any Type Of Hair

No matter if you have dirty hair or clean hair, curly or straight, long or short; you can contract head lice. It doesn't matter your gender or race. Head lice just need a head of hair to live in and a scalp to get their blood supply from. The only way head lice won't bother you is if you are bald.

Your Child May Have Had Lice for a While Before You Notice

The itchiness on the scalp, back of the neck or behind the ears is an allergic reaction to lice saliva or lice bites and it often takes three to four weeks for that reaction to start (if at all). This means that your child may have had lice for a couple weeks before you notice it.

Regular Head Checks Is the Best Way To Find Lice

Since the itchiness may not occur until weeks into having lice (or not at all), it's important to perform weekly head checks on your young children and daily head checks if there's an outbreak at school. The sooner you find them, the sooner you can get rid of them. Nobody wants their child to have lice any longer than necessary.