



Key Messages about Head Lice

- Head lice are small insects that live on the scalp, where they lay eggs (nits). Head lice do not spread disease, and anyone can get them. It's not your fault if you or your child has head lice.
- There is no medical reason for a child with head lice to stay home from school or child care. However, some schools and child cares may enforce no-nit policies. No-nit policies are discouraged by both the [Canadian Pediatric Society](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).
- You do not need to report head lice to your local Public Health Unit. The Health Unit does not provide mass screening for head lice, or "clearance" for your child to return to school or child care.
- Head Lice treatment products are free for people 24 and under who have a prescription and are covered by [OHIP+](#). Head Lice treatment can also be purchased without a prescription.
- Talk to a pharmacist or health care provider for help with choosing a head lice treatment. Follow the product instructions. Most products require two treatments, 7-10 days apart. Only treat household members who actually have live lice.

Tips to reduce your risk of getting head lice:

- Check for head lice after being close to someone with head lice. If one person in the household has head lice, check the entire household. It is important that all individuals who have head lice be treated at the same time.
- Teach children to avoid head-to-head contact with others and to avoid sharing items that are used on their head such as hats, combs, hairbrushes, hair accessories, and headphones.

Signs and symptoms of head lice infestation:

- Scratching of the skin, behind the ears, on the neck and scalp or complaints about itchiness.
- Nits attached to hair, most easily seen behind ears and around the nape of the neck.

How do I check for head lice?

- Look carefully through the hair for live lice and nits. Lice are usually found very close to the scalp, at the base of the neck and behind the ears.
- Head lice move fast and are so small that they can be hard to see. A magnifying glass and good lighting may help.
- If you only find nits and no lice, check again every day for 1 week to make sure that you did not miss any live lice.

For more information, visit the following websites:

http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice

http://www.soinsdenosenfants.cps.ca/handouts/head_lice

[A Public Health Guide for Child Care Professionals](#)

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