

What Are Head Lice?

Head lice are a very common problem for kids, ages 3 to 12. They are tiny wingless parasitic insects that live on the scalp of humans. Lice feed on small amounts of blood. They are not dangerous and do not spread diseases; they are just bothersome. Lice are very small but you can still see them with the naked eye. An adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed and is grayish-white or tan in color. Lice lay eggs called nits. Nits can be found on the individual strands of hair. Nits look like tiny yellow, tan or brown dots before they hatch. The nits will usually hatch within 2 weeks after they are laid.

With an infestation of lice comes itching and scratching. When the lice bite the scalp to feed, their saliva causes irritation of the skin. Itching can be mild to severe depending on the sensitivity of your child's skin. Lice and nits are most often found behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. Head Lice are **HIGHLY** contagious. They are spread from head to head contact, from sharing hair combs, hair ties, barrettes, hats, scarves, or from sharing a bed. An adult louse can survive up to 2 days off the scalp. House hold pets are safe from lice, so there is no special treatment for them.

Helpful Resources

Kidshealth.org

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/>

For Questions or Concerns

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Head Lice Information

