

SCHOOL HEALTH NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION



LICE

“The American Academy of Pediatrics now advises that “no healthy child should be excluded from or allowed to miss school time because of head lice”.

http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/conditions/a/head_lice.htm, 2015

What Are Lice?

Head lice are extremely contagious—but essentially harmless—insect parasites. Head lice don't carry diseases.

Head lice must feed off another living body in order to survive. Their source of food is human blood, which they get from your scalp. Head lice can't fly, aren't airborne, and can't swim or live in water apart from their host. In fact, they cling to hair strands for dear life when you bathe

Transmission

Head lice are transmitted from one host to another through close personal contact. **For the most part, this means that a non-infested person would have to be in head-to-head**

contact with an infested person. Sharing combs, brushes, towels, hats and other personal items can hasten the spread of head lice.

The louse's way of travel is crawling. **In rare cases**, head lice can crawl onto a person's clothing and on to another person's hair and scalp, but this must happen quickly. Lice can't live more than a day or so without nourishment...i.e. blood.

Misconceptions

Having a case of lice can be embarrassing. A common misconception about head lice is that it is a sign of poor personal hygiene. Some even believe that it affects only people of lower economic status. These ideas can't be farther from the truth.

People of all genders, ages, and social class can catch head lice. However, African-Americans are generally less apt to get lice than their Caucasian, Hispanic or Asian counterparts, according to the [National Pediculosis Association](#). This may be due to the difference in hair texture.

Protect Yourself

Although head lice can be annoying, proper treatment can eradicate the infestation fairly quickly and painlessly. In existence for basically as long as humans have been around, head lice aren't likely to become extinct any time soon. However, you can prevent your family from becoming infested.

Don't share personal items such as hats, scarves, hair accessories, and combs with people—especially those who have head lice. Give each family member their own bedding, towels, and hairbrushes to prevent the spread of head lice

Treatments

Over the counter medications or prescription medications are available.

Names of some of the over the counter shampoos are: Nix, Rid, Fairy Tales, and Pin X.

Doctors can prescribe lice shampoo, and depending on insurance this could be **minimal** or **zero cost**.

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

<http://www.healthline.com/health/lice/where-do-lice-come-from#Misconceptions6>

<http://headlicecenter.com/where-do-lice-come-from/>