

Facing Head Lice

A Guide for Families

Head lice bugging your family? Not quite sure? You are not alone. Most parents aren't exactly sure what to look for or what symptoms might appear. Usually, the first indication is itching and scratching in the back of the head or around the ears. Below is a helpful guide as you further examine your child's hair.

What Do Head Lice Look Like?

You may see different stages of head lice when checking your child: eggs and empty egg shells (nits), baby lice (nymphs), and adult lice. Female lice lay nits on hair shafts. Nits are tiny, teardrop shaped, and appear yellowish-white in color. They're often found around the ears or the nape of the neck and can look like dandruff. Adult lice have 6 legs, are tan to grayish-white, and are about the size of a sesame seed.

What Am I Looking For?



Nit



Nymph



Fully Grown
Louse

How to check for Head Lice?

- Step 1: Wet your child's hair with water and/or conditioner. Wetting the hair beforehand is recommended because it temporarily immobilizes the lice and the conditioner makes it easier to get a comb through the hair.
- Step 2: Thoroughly detangle your child's hair.
- Step 3: Part your child's hair into sections and use a nit comb to search your child's hair. Comb from the scalp to the ends of the hair shaft looking for small grayish-brown eggs, or live lice.
- Step 4: If you spot just one live louse, you have lice. Further action on your part is required.

My Child Has Head Lice. Now What?

- Check the whole family for head lice.
- Anyone with evidence of an active lice infestation should be treated, and all persons with active head lice should be treated at the same time.
- Talk with your pediatrician or family physician to get appropriate care and/or consider selecting an over-the-counter lice treatment.
- Next, remove the lice from your home.
 - Use hot water to wash clothes, sheets, pillowcases, blankets, and anything the person's head may have touched followed by a hot drying cycle. Seal non-washable items such as stuffed animals in a plastic bag for several weeks.
 - Vacuum your carpets and furniture.
 - Disinfect combs and brushes by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- **Please notify** the classroom teacher, Nurse Mary and Mariela Rivera (parent coordinator), so that they can inform other parents in the class and those parents may take preventive measures with their families.

TIPS FOR MANAGING

- It's important to head check up until 2 weeks from the first lice exposure in order to stop the cycle of lice and the risk of re-infestation. Why? Because sometimes, even after careful and diligent treatment, one may miss a nit. And if you miss any nits and they hatch, there's a chance the young louse will mature and lay more nits. We must beat the cycle of a louse's life!
- Retreatment after 7 to 10 days is usually recommended to assure that no eggs have survived.
- Almost anyone can get head lice and it is not a sign of poor hygiene.
- Head lice cannot jump or fly but most often spread by direct head-to-head contact. Remind your family to avoid sharing hats, scarves, combs, or brushes. Keep your hair to yourself with an up hairdo like a bun, braid, or gathered ponytail.