



Children's Health

Lice

HOW TO GET RID OF THEM

Lice are not a serious medical problem, but they are very annoying and they spread easily. Regardless of how well-groomed and clean your child is, he or she can get lice. Lice infestations spread at school, from toilet seats or from contact with someone who has them. Lice are spread from person to person. There are three types of lice: head lice, pubic lice (also called crabs) and body lice. The most common type of lice is head lice. All are attracted to body heat. They are flat, wingless "bugs" that feed on human blood. Bites from lice cause intense itching and red spots on the skin that look like mosquito bites. Adult lice are rarely seen. Female lice lay as many as six eggs a day. The eggs hatch in eight to 10 days, after which time the biting begins.

TIPS FOR PREVENTING LICE INFESTATION

- ▶ Discourage sharing hats, brushes or combs.
- ▶ Discourage lying on a pillow that belongs to another child.
- ▶ Encourage frequent hair and body cleaning.
- ▶ Check children for lice at least once a week, more often if your child is scratching his or her head or body.



TYPES OF LICE AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR THEM

BODY LICE—These lice burrow under the skin. Hives and other abrasions are frequently caused from scratching them. They can usually be found in the seams of underwear.

HEAD LICE—This type of lice is the most visible. They form "nits" or clusters of lice eggs on hair strands. Commonly, they resemble tiny pussy willow buds that are often mistaken for dandruff.

PUBIC LICE—These lice are found on the skin of the pubic area and armpits and on eyelashes. They're commonly referred to as crabs because of their appearance.

TREATMENT

- ▶ Over-the-counter medications are available for treatment. Following the manufacturer's instructions, treat the entire family. For head lice, comb the hair well with a fine-toothed comb after treatment to remove all eggs.
- ▶ Wash all clothing worn in the last week and bedding and towels in hot water and dry them in a hot dryer. Iron things that can't be washed.
- ▶ Vacuum furniture, mattresses, rugs, stuffed animals and car seats.
- ▶ Immediately notify your child's school and anyone who may have been in close contact with your child to help prevent infecting others.
- ▶ Notify your child's doctor if scratching causes infection.