



# Lice (Pediculosis)

(A common contagious infestation caused by tiny insects living on hair or skin)

## What Is Pediculosis (Lice)?

**Pediculosis** means infestation with **lice**, tiny insects that live on hair or skin and feed on blood from the scalp or body.



The most common type is:

- **Head lice**

Other types include:

- **Body lice**
- **Pubic lice** (“crabs”)

Lice are common, especially among school-aged children, and are not a sign of poor hygiene.

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## What Do Lice and Nits Look Like?

### Lice

- Tiny moving insects
- Tan, gray, or brown
- About the size of a sesame seed

## **Nits (Eggs)**

- Small white or yellowish oval eggs
- Firmly attached to hair shafts
- Often mistaken for dandruff

Common areas:

- Behind the ears
  - Back of the scalp and neck
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## **What Symptoms Do Lice Cause?**

Symptoms may include:

- Itching of the scalp
- Tickling or crawling sensation
- Red bumps or irritation
- Difficulty sleeping due to nighttime itching
- Scratch marks or sores

Some people may have lice with minimal symptoms initially.

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## **How Do Lice Spread?**

Head lice spread mainly through:

- Head-to-head contact
- Shared hats, brushes, or hair accessories
- Close contact among children

Lice do **not** jump or fly.

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## **How Are Lice Treated?**

**Common treatments include:**

- Over-the-counter lice shampoos or lotions
- Prescription lice medications
- Wet combing with a fine-tooth nit comb
- Cleaning recently used bedding, hats, and hair items

Treatment often requires:

- Careful nit removal
- Repeat treatment in about 7–10 days depending on the product used

Close contacts may also need evaluation.

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## Pre-Op Instructions

*(Before treatment or office evaluation)*

- Avoid using multiple lice products at the same time unless instructed
  - Do not apply conditioner before medicated lice treatment unless directed
  - Bring all recent treatment information if prior therapies failed
  - Tell us if:
    - The scalp is severely irritated
    - Sores or infection are present
    - The patient has medication allergies
    - Multiple household members are affected
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## Post-Op Instructions

*(After treatment)*

### What's normal

- Mild scalp irritation
- Continued itching for several days
- Occasional remaining nits while hair grows out

### Aftercare

- Use nit combing as directed
- Wash recently used pillowcases, hats, bedding, and brushes
- Avoid sharing hair items
- Check close household contacts

### Call the office if

- Live lice continue after treatment
- Severe scalp irritation develops
- Pus or infection occurs

- Recurrent infestations continue despite treatment
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## **Important Cleaning Recommendations**

Wash items used within the previous 1–2 days:

- Bedding
- Pillowcases
- Hats
- Brushes and combs

Hot water washing and heat drying are commonly recommended.

Items that cannot be washed may be sealed temporarily in a plastic bag.

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## **Lice (Pediculosis) FAQ**

### **Are lice caused by poor hygiene?**

No. Anyone can get lice.

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### **Can lice jump or fly?**

No. Lice crawl but do not jump or fly.

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### **What's the difference between lice and dandruff?**

Nits stick firmly to hair shafts, while dandruff flakes brush off easily.

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### **Do pets spread head lice?**

No. Human head lice live on humans, not pets.

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### **Can adults get lice?**

Yes. Although common in children, adults can also become infested.

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**Why does itching continue after treatment?**

The scalp may remain irritated temporarily even after lice are gone.

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**Do all nits need to be removed?**

Nit removal helps reduce recurrence and confusion about active infestation.

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**When can children return to school?**

Policies vary. Many schools allow return after treatment has started.