



Head Lice 101

Head lice are tiny insects that live and feed on the skin of the scalp among human hair. In order to survive, **head lice** require a human host. They are mainly acquired by direct head to head contact with an infested person's hair, but may be transferred by shared hair combs, brushes, hats and other hair accessories. They are capable of surviving away from the human host on bedding or furniture for a brief period of time. Despite the hysteria that accompanies the discovery of **head lice**, they do not pose a public health problem. Their presence can cause itching and scratching that could lead to a secondary infection of the skin. The greatest harm associated with **head lice** is the overuse of pesticides to eliminate them. Because **head lice** are often found in the hair of school age children, it is important for families to be proactive in identifying infestations and treating them appropriately. Most important, remain calm.

- Periodically inspect your child's hair for live, crawling lice
 - If live lice are found, treat hair with a pediculicide shampoo (*follow label instructions*)
 - Comb hair thoroughly with a louse comb to remove lice and nits (*eggs*) that are attached to the hair shaft (*If you do not use a shampoo, manual removal with a comb can be an effective, but time consuming, method of removing head lice and nits safely*).
 - Change and launder pillow cases, pajamas and towels worn or used within two days of finding live lice (*clothes dryer set on high heat or a hot pressing iron may kill any lice or their eggs on pillowcases, sheets, towels, stuffed animals and night clothes*)
 - Combs, brushes, hats and other hair accessories should be washed in hot, soapy water to dislodge lice and nits
 - Child car seats can be vacuumed to remove any lice or eggs that might have temporarily lodged there
 - Insecticidal sprays for carpets or furniture are not recommended. Vacuum carpets, rugs and upholstered furniture and dispose of vacuum bag
 - A second treatment is often required about ten days after first shampoo to target lice that hatch after the initial treatment (use louse comb daily to remove nits and lice)
 - If live lice persist after two treatments with over-the counter products, consult your child's pediatrician as prescription pediculicides may be needed
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The Ware Public School District has a **No Nits Policy**. Students identified with possible **head lice** infestations will be referred to the school nurse for evaluation. If children have **live lice and/or nits**, they will be dismissed from school for treatment and/or removal of nits. Children may return to school when they are **lice and nit free**. Parents/guardians are required to bring the child to the nurse for examination before the student may reenter school.

