

If your child gets head lice, don't panic; call your pediatrician

While the thought of head lice might make your skin crawl, rest assured they don't cause serious illness or carry any diseases.

Head lice are about the size of a sesame seed. Their bodies usually are pale and gray. The bugs feed on small amounts of blood from the scalp, and they can't survive more than one day without a blood meal.

Lice can attach to the hair of anyone's head, no matter if hair is clean or dirty.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently updated its guidance for treating head lice, saying lice are neither a health hazard nor a sign of poor hygiene. The guidance also says schools should not keep children with nits (lice eggs and shell casings) out of the classroom (<https://bit.ly/3SP8Say>).

Regular checks are a good way to spot head lice before they have time to multiply and infest your child's hair.

To check for head lice:

- Seat your child in a brightly lit room.
- Part the hair.
- Look for crawling lice on your child's scalp one section at a time. Live lice are hard to find. They avoid light and move quickly.
- Nits look like small white or yellow-brown specks and are firmly attached to the hair near the scalp. The easiest place to find them is at the hairline at the back of the neck or behind the ears. Nits can be confused with dandruff, dirt particles or hairspray droplets.
- Use a fine-tooth comb to help you search the scalp.

If lice are found, check with your pediatrician before beginning any treatment. The most effective way to treat head lice is with head lice medicine. After each treatment, remove nits every two to three days for two to three weeks. Head lice medicine should be used only when it is certain your child has living head lice.

You may want to wash your child's clothes, towels, hats and bed linens in hot water and dry on high heat if they were used within two days before lice were found and treated. All household members and close contacts should be checked for lice. Do not spray pesticides in your home.

Working quickly and safely will help prevent head lice from spreading.

For more information, visit <https://bit.ly/3CkMb8Q>.



— Steve Schering



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