

Sarah Says:

What you should know about Head Lice

Head lice is a communicable disease that can be found where ever people gather. A sign of head lice is frequent head scratching and/or a tickling sensation of the scalp. Anyone can get head lice. It is spread from direct head/hair contact, but also from the sharing of hats, hair brushes, combs, scarves, towels, pillows or other articles that touch the head/hair. Lice do not jump or fly and do not survive more than 24 hours without a host. Lice are reddish brown wingless insects that can survive on a human host for about 30 days.

The female louse lays 3-5 eggs /nits a day. Lice eggs (nits) are grayish white, oval shaped and glued at an angle to the side of the hair shaft. The eggs hatch in 7-10 days and it takes another 7-10 days for the louse to mature and lay their own eggs.

Over the counter mediated shampoo, cream or lotions are available for treatment. Follow the directions exactly as on the product box to ensure successful treatment. Treatment may be repeated in 7-10 days to assure all nits have been killed and to avoid re-infestation. Combs, brushes and hair products should be soaked in hot (not boiling) water for 10 minutes or discarded. Bedding and recently worn clothes are to be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer. Airborne environmental fumigation is not an effective treatment for head lice. Vigilant screening for head lice is required in order to manage an infestation. This includes the daily use of a nit comb and heads checks for lice and nits every 2-3 days. Head checks are performed by parting the hair and checking small sections for lice and nits on the scalp, behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. A magnifying glass and bright light may help.

For more information with graphics of lice and nits:

<http://www.cdc.gov/Ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/default.htm>

