



ITCHY SCALP? HOW TO FIND HEAD LICE EARLY

Ahead of the new school year, dermatologists encourage parents to be on the lookout for these pesky critters

ROSEMONT, Ill. (Aug. 13, 2019) — Head lice affect about six to 12 million children, ages three to 12, each year in the United States. Although head lice are not known to carry disease, dermatologists from the American Academy of Dermatology say an infestation can cause some uncomfortable symptoms. Knowing how to spot the signs of head lice early can help prevent the infestation from spreading.

“Although anyone can get head lice, children in preschool and elementary school are the most at risk,” says board-certified dermatologist Sarah Lynn Chamlin, MD, FAAD. “However, contrary to popular belief, head lice cannot jump from person to person; they have to crawl. For this reason, transmission can often be prevented by not sharing personal items, such as hats, scarves, coats, hair accessories, brushes and combs.”

To help parents find head lice early, Dr. Chamlin recommends the following tips:

1. **Learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms.** An itchy scalp is the most obvious symptom of head lice. However, other signs and symptoms include a crawling sensation, seeing lice or eggs, difficulty sleeping (as head lice are most active at night), scratch marks around the hair line, swollen lymph nodes in the neck, and pink eye. Keep in mind that adults can get head lice too. If you notice any of these signs and symptoms, make sure to get checked for lice.
2. **Check your child’s hair.** Grab a fine-tooth comb and sit under a bright light for better visibility. Wet your child’s hair and separate it into sections. Beginning at the scalp, slowly comb outward through the hair, section by section. Adult lice are usually light-brown and resemble sesame seeds. They move very quickly. Eggs are yellow, brown or tan and look like tiny seeds that appear to be cemented to hairs close to the scalp. If an egg has hatched, the seed-like object will be clear.
3. **Inspect household items.** Most lice spread through head-to-head contact. However, head lice can also crawl onto objects that come into contact with human hair, such as sheets, pillowcases and towels. Examine these items, and if you find lice, machine wash them in hot water and dry them at a high temperature.
4. **Look through the hamper.** Carefully inspect the clothes your child has worn the past two days, as lice may have crawled onto these items. If you find signs of lice, machine wash and dry your child’s clothes using the hottest temperatures.
5. **Teach your child to avoid sharing certain items:** To help prevent lice in the future, teach your child to avoid sharing objects that touch the head, such as brushes, combs, hats and accessories.

“If you find lice in your child’s hair or on any object in your home, alert your child’s school, daycare or babysitter so that your child’s classmates and other contacts can be checked,” says Dr. Chamlin. “There are many [at-home treatments](#) available for head lice at your local drug or grocery store. However, see a board-certified dermatologist if you have any questions or need a recommendation for an effective treatment.”

These tips are demonstrated in “[How to Find Head Lice Early](#),” a video posted to the AAD website and [YouTube channel](#). This video is part of the AAD’s “Video of the Month” series, which offers tips people can use to properly care for their skin, hair and nails.

How to Find Head Lice Early

Aug. 13, 2019

Page 2 of 2

To find a board-certified dermatologist in your area, visit aad.org/findaderm.

#

Contact

Nicole Dobkin, (847) 240-1746, ndobkin@aad.org

Cristina Mutchler, (847) 240-1713, cmutchler@aad.org

More Information

[Head lice signs, symptoms and treatment](#)

[Ask a Dermatologist: Are head lice dangerous?](#)

[Ask a Dermatologist: What is the best treatment for head lice?](#)

About the AAD

Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 20,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or aad.org. Follow the AAD on [Facebook](#) (American Academy of Dermatology), [Twitter](#) (@AADskin), [Instagram](#) (@AADskin1), or [YouTube](#) (AcademyofDermatology).