

Suggestions for Getting Rid of Head Lice

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny, barely visible insects that live in the hair and scalp of humans. They survive by sucking blood from the scalp and depositing their eggs on the shafts of human hair, very near the scalp. The eggs (called nits) are deposited with a sticky substance that makes them hard to remove without special shampoo and special combs. They are most easily seen in bright light.

How do they get into a family member's hair?

Lice do not jump or fly, however they get around quite easily through simple touch, usually a result of children playing together. They also can be passed along through shared clothing, combs, brushes, towels, bed sheets or stuffed animals. Contact with carpets, couches and auto seats can also result in getting lice if someone with lice has used these items recently.

Steps to get rid of head lice!

- 1. Shampoo with lice shampoo (and conditioner) available over the counter at your drugstore. The shampoo and conditioner has a pesticide in it, which will help kill most of the lice and the nits.*
- 2. Use the special lice comb (also available through the pharmacist at your drug store) to work at getting all the eggs from the hair. You should know that the combs do not always work at getting all the eggs and you will have to pick the remaining ones off by hand. This is why some people cut their hair shorter in order to ease sliding the nit down the hair strand and off the end.*
- 3. Examine other family members to spot lice or eggs and use the same shampoo and conditioner on their hair if there is any suspicion of lice or eggs.*
- 4. Think of all the household items (clothing, towels, sheets, etc.) that need to be washed in order to remove lice and nits from them. These items must be washed in very hot water (130 degrees).*
- 5. Place the larger items like stuffed animals, coats and blankets in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes after each use.*
- 6. Use a lice spray (also available to drug stores) on the floors and carpeting.*

It is important to insure that combs and brushes are clean by soaking them in the lice shampoo or in water that is at least 130 degrees. For one week after the first shampoo, check the entire family each day for signs of lice or nits. Also, continue to vacuum all floors and rugs each day. After one week, repeat the shampoo treatment, combing and "nit-picking" any remaining eggs.