



Grey Bruce
Public Health

Head lice FAQs

WHEN CAN MY CHILD GO BACK TO SCHOOL?

It is determined by the policy of the School Board for your child's school.
Call your child's school to find out.



WHO SHOULD I TELL WHEN I FIND HEAD LICE? WHY SHOULD I TELL ANYONE?

- Call your child's school or daycare if you are the one who discovered it.
- Tell anyone who may have had contact with your child in the few days before it was discovered e.g. children at a sleepover, after-school activities.
- Telling others will help to identify, treat and prevent further spread of head lice.

HOW CAN I PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING AGAIN?

Although you can't prevent it altogether, there are some things you can do:

- Check your child's hair every week, so if they get it, you will see it quickly before there are too many nits.
- Teach your child not to share personal items that are used on their head e.g. comb, hat, headband, barrettes.
- Teach your child to avoid head-to-head contact with others.



WHAT IF THE TREATMENT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE WORKING?

Lice treatment is **free** for Ontario residents 24 years and under through OHIP +. Talk to your doctor for more information. Here are a few reasons why the treatment may not have worked:

- It wasn't a head lice infestation.
- The directions for the treatment were not followed carefully. You must apply a second treatment at the right time for the product.
- The product was put on hair that had been washed with conditioning shampoo or rinsed with hair conditioner. It reduces the effectiveness.
- All of the nits were not removed and some of them lived and hatched.
- It's a re-infestation – your child got head lice right away again.
- The head lice may be resistant to the product you used. Ask your health care provider or the pharmacist to suggest another product.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFO:

Website resources:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/>
- https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/health-conditions-and-treatments/head_lice

Call your local Health Unit:

- Grey Bruce Public Health: 519-376-9420





What you **need** to know about head lice.

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that live on the scalp. They do not carry any diseases so they're not a public health risk. Anyone can get head lice.

NITS

- Nits are eggs that are laid by female louse and are firmly attached to the hair shaft.
- They are about the size of a pinhead and are often found along the forehead, back of the head and behind the ears and are within one cm of the scalp.
- The nits are grayish-white, tan or yellow. Some can be the same colour as hair, making them difficult to see.
- Nits hatch in six to 10 days.

ADULT LICE

- Lice are the size of a sesame seed and are tan to grayish-white in colour. They may look darker in people with dark hair.
- They need blood to survive and can live up to 30 days on the head but will die within one to two days if they fall off the head.



HOW ARE HEAD LICE SPREAD?

- Head lice are spread mainly through direct head-to-head contact. When heads are together lice crawl very quickly from one head to another. Lice cannot fly or jump.
- They may also be spread by sharing items such as combs and hats, but this is less common.
- Head lice do not live on animals.



WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?

Frequent itching and sores on the scalp from scratching. There may be no symptoms. Check all family members for lice by:

- Using good lighting. Daylight is best, so try sitting by a window.
- Looking through the hair for lice. They can be difficult to see because they are small and hide within the hair and move very quickly.
- Using a magnifying glass and fine toothed comb can help.
- Looking for nits firmly attached to the hair shaft and within one cm of the scalp. Part the hair into small sections and move from one side of the head to the other. Nits can be confused with dandruff or hair spray droplets - they will not fall off if touched.
- Nits will only come off if they are pulled off with your finger nail or a comb.



TREATING THE HOME

- Wash clothing and bedding used by the affected person in hot water and dry in a hot dryer.
- Place items that cannot be washed in a sealed bag for two weeks.
- Put all combs, brushes and hair accessories in hot, soapy water.
- Treat only the person who has head lice with a product that kills live lice. Treatment must be repeated again seven to 10 days after first treatment.