

Head Lice : A guide for parents

Dear Parent,

The Healthspring team has put together useful information, including common questions that you may have regarding Head lice and also some easy steps for you to take and to protect your child.

Please go through it and call us, or write to us, in case there are any further questions or if you require further information. You can reach us at Shivani.dawlatjada@healthspring.in, call 61303535 and ask to speak to Dr. Khullar, or call 9833008636 and speak with Shivani Dawlatjada.

What are head lice? How do I know if my child is infected?

Head lice are parasites that can be found on the heads of people. Common symptoms you should watch out for in your child include itching, sores on the head, a tickling feeling of something moving in the hair and irritability.

How do children typically contract head lice?

The most common form of getting head lice is through contact with an already infected child. Personal contact during play, school, or sports activities, and at school, home, slumber parties, or camps or wearing infested clothing, such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, or hair ribbons helps spread head lice. Also, sharing combs, brushes or towels is another way to contract head lice.

What should you do if your child contracts head lice at school?

- If you find head lice in your child, please inform the home room teacher immediately. He/she will ensure no further spread within the class.
- Please keep your child at home till he/she is free of head lice, to prevent further spread to other children.
- Go over to your nearest chemist and look for an over-the-counter head lice solution like Selsun.
- Help your child remove all clothing, and follow the label instructions to apply lice medicine.
- If your child has extra-long hair, you may need to use a second bottle. Do not rewash hair for one to two days after treatment.
- Have the infested person put on clean clothing after treatment.
- If some live lice are still found eight to 12 hours after treatment but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. Comb the hair slowly to remove any other lice. The medicine sometimes takes longer.

- After the initial treatment, check, comb, and remove nits and lice from hair every two to three days. Re-treat in seven to 10 days.
- Check all treated people for two to three weeks until you are sure all lice and nits are gone.

When is my child ready to go back to school?

Once the initial treatment is completed, as discussed above, please check and re-check for lice and nits every 2-3 days. While your child can go back to school after the initial treatment, please continue checks and treatment for the next 2 weeks and maintain a close watch.

What can you do at home to prevent further spread of head lice?

Since head lice mainly spread through personal contact, or sharing infected items, treating the whole house is a laborious but important task.

- Machine-wash all washable clothing and bed linens in the hot water cycle that the infested person touched during the two days before treatment (to kill the lice and nits).
- Dry clean clothing that is not washable (coats, hats, scarves, etc.), *or* store all clothing, stuffed animals, comforters, etc., that cannot be washed or dry cleaned into a plastic bag and seal it for two weeks.
- Soak combs and brushes for one hour in rubbing alcohol, lysol, or wash with soap and hot (130 F; 55 C) water and then place in bag and leave in freezer for two days.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture. Do not use fumigant sprays. (They can be toxic if inhaled.)

How can I protect my child from contracting head lice?

- Good hair care will not prevent head lice infection but it may help to identify head lice at an early stage and so help control the spread of the infection.
- When hair is washed, damaged lice will float on the surface of the water. Also, the presence of lice may be indicated by finding a black powder on the pillow in the morning.
- Make sure your child uses a clean comb/brush always, and avoids sharing the same with his/her friends.

We hope this answers your questions, and be assured that Oberoi International School and Healthspring are vigilant, and will help keep your child healthy. Please do feel free to reach out to us if you have any more questions.