

HEAD LICE ----- SOME SURPRISES

1. Head lice are insects that lay tiny whitish-colored eggs (called nits) on the hair strand near the scalp. The eggs are attached to the hair strand by a glue-like substance. They look like dandruff, but, unlike dandruff, nits can only be pulled off with force.
2. Head lice are not a sign of uncleanliness. They love clean hair ! (It's easier to latch on.)
3. Lice do not hop, jump or fly. They are not passed on pets. The only way they can get from one person to another is direct touching, head to head. The only place lice can survive and thrive is on the human head.
4. A louse on a hat or coat is a dying louse who will not be capable of reproducing. Healthy ones stay close to the scalp until they sense another human head. They cannot survive without blood. That is why they bite.
5. Head lice are not a source of infection or disease. They are simply a nuisance.
6. Sleep-overs among friends and families are felt to be the most common places where lice are spread. They can also be spread in schools.
7. The most effective screenings are done at home by parents who check their own children, treat if any are found, and make efforts to remove the nits. Removing the nits with a special metal fine tooth comb takes time, but it is the only way to get rid of them. They do not wash out.
8. Head lice shampoos have been overused. Many head lice have become resistant to them. No head lice product is 100% effective. That is why removal of nits is essential. Remember – head lice products are pesticides, which can be absorbed through the skin and can become toxic if overused. Never treat or retreat “just in case” in the absence of live lice. Follow product directions carefully.

Information from American Academy of Pediatrics, Harvard School of Public Health and the CDC.

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From the Clinic