

Nitty Gritty

FACTS OF LICE

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

Lice are small, wingless, greyish-white insects (they turn a darker grey after they have fed on blood) with flattened, elongated bodies with oval heads. They are about 2-3 mm and live on the scalp.

WHY ARE THEY SUCH A PROBLEM?

Every civilization in human history has tried to get rid of head lice. But they're still here. That's because head lice are very, very good at what they do - and because, until now, there has been no safe, reliable way to remove an entire infestation (head lice, nits AND 'live' eggs) quickly and easily. As in the movie 'Alien', if you don't get rid of the eggs, you end up right back where you started. That's why the Nitty Gritty NitFree Comb really is such a huge breakthrough - because it's the only way to get the whole job done.

WHERE CAN HEAD LICE BE FOUND?

Head lice spend their entire lifespan in our hair, clinging tightly onto it as soon as they emerge from their eggs. They tend to stay close to our scalps in order to feed directly from our blood.

HOW DOES SOMEONE GET HEAD LICE?

Head lice are very good at moving from one host to another during head-to-head contact. When your hair is touching someone else's, even for a few moments, there is an opportunity for head lice to migrate. This is why they are so prevalent amongst primary school children.

CAN HEAD LICE JUMP OR FLY?

No. They don't fly, jump, hop or skip. But they do move very swiftly from one human head to another during everyday head-to-head contact.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EGGS AND NITS?

'Live' head louse eggs are each glued to an individual hair strand as soon as they are laid. Nits are the empty egg cases, which remain glued in place on the hair as it grows out after the lice have hatched. Nits are often the first visible sign of a head lice infestation.

WHAT DO THE EGGS LOOK LIKE?

They are small (about the size of a pin head), white to cream in colour and they look like a tiny, tiny teardrop securely fastened to the hair shaft.

WHERE ARE EGGS FOUND?

Female head lice attach each egg to the root of an individual hair strand, very close to the scalp, so that when they hatch out, they are very close to their food source. Any eggs found more than about 1/2" from the scalp will be the nits, which remain glued to the hairshaft and grow out as our hair grows.

HOW MANY EGGS DOES A FEMALE HEAD LOUSE LAY?

A female head louse produces about four to six eggs per day.

HOW LONG DO HEAD LICE LIVE?

Head lice typically live for about 25 -35 days. They can only survive for a number of hours once removed from a human head, though.

HOW MANY HEAD LICE ARE USUALLY FOUND ON AN INFESTED PERSON?

Head lice go on laying eggs when any infestation is left untreated. Not everyone itches, and there is sometimes no visible sign of infestation until the nits (empty egg cases) grow out in the hair, so there can be hundreds of head lice on one person's head during a prolonged infestation. However, the average number of lice found on an infested person is around 30.

DO HEAD LICE PREFER CLEAN OR DIRTY HAIR?

No, head lice have no preference for clean or dirty hair. They are tough, resourceful little creatures. You can't wash them out, and there is no scientific evidence to indicate that either washing or not washing the hair will do anything to prevent an infestation.

DO THEY PREFER GIRLS OR BOYS?

Head lice have no preference, but girls tend to spend more time than boys in head-to-head contact. Also they often have longer hair than boys, which can make it easier for head lice to move from one head to another.

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO GET HEAD LICE?

Anyone who has hair on their head and doesn't live entirely alone on a desert island is likely to become infested at some point in their life time. School-age children spend time in large groups, with lots of head-to-head contact, so they are often the most common ones to get head lice and then pass them onto their parents when they have head-to-head contact.

DO HEAD LICE BITE?

Technically speaking head lice don't actually bite. They attach to the scalp and use needle-like feeding tubes to suck blood. This is painless, but their saliva and faeces can sometimes cause an itching allergic reaction. Scratching can lead to broken and inflamed skin.

DO HEAD LICE SPREAD DISEASES?

No. Their presence can aggravate some existing conditions, but they don't communicate or carry any diseases.

CAN HEAD LICE SURVIVE ON PETS?

No. Head lice only live on humans, moving directly from one person to another during head-to-head contact.

HOW CAN YOU DETECT IF SOMEONE HAS HEAD LICE?

Often there is no sign of infestation until nits – the hatched empty egg cases - start to become visible as they grow out in the hair. As we keep saying... not everyone itches.

It's best to use the Nitty Gritty NitFree Comb to do a careful visual check for nits, eggs and head lice once or twice a week. The best time to do this is when you wash and condition the hair, as in dry hair they will move rapidly away from the area being examined. Detection will be easiest with conditioner on the hair, as this will immobilise the lice. Section the hair and comb from the scalp downwards. After each stroke check the teeth of the comb for live lice. Fully grown head lice are about the size of a small ant, but newly hatched eggs can be as small as a pinhead. If you inspect on dry hair make sure you do so in good light - by a window or under a desk lamp is ideal. Also look for eggs glued to the roots of the hair very close to the scalp. If you find any eggs or nits attached to the hair, then check all family members and use the Nitty Gritty NitFree Comb to treat everyone who has lice, nits or eggs in their hair.

DO I NEED TO TREAT EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE?

We always recommend that you check everyone in the household, as well as other close family members who are regular visitors, such as grandparents - because not everyone itches when head lice are present. Then use the Nitty Gritty NitFree Comb with either hair conditioner or our Nitty Gritty Aromatherapy Head Lice Solution to remove head lice, nits and 'live' eggs from anyone who shows signs of being infested.

Do remember...

Head lice are annoying, but they are not dangerous. Don't ever let them make you or your children unhappy. With our wonderful Nitty Gritty NitFree Comb they are easily treatable, without any pain or drama.

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