

Head Lice

What are head lice?

Head lice, *Pediculus humanus capitis*, are parasitic insects found on the head, eyebrows and eyelashes of people. Head lice are found worldwide. According to the CDC, an estimated 6 million to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States among children 3 to 11 years of age.

Who is at risk for getting head lice?

In the United States, head lice are most common among pre-school children attending child care, elementary school and the household members of infested children. Infestation is less common among African-Americans than among persons of other races.

What are the signs and symptom of head lice infestation?

- Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair
- Itching caused by an allergic reaction to the bites
- Irritability and difficulty sleeping; head lice are most active in the dark
- Sores on head caused by scratching

Where are head lice more commonly found?

They are most commonly found on the scalp, behind the ears near the neckline at the back of the neck. Head lice are rarely found on the body, eyelashes or eyebrows.

How did my child get head lice?

Head lice move by crawling; they cannot hop or fly. Anyone who comes in close contact, especially head-to-head contact, is at great risk. Spread by contact with clothing or other personal items used by an infested person is uncommon. Personal hygiene or cleanliness in the home or school has nothing to do with getting head lice.

