

66 - Lice

AHHH!!! We know , we know -- nobody likes 'em, nobody wants 'em, and just mentioning them is terrifying. Unfortunately, 1 out of every 10 kids will get lice. But what exactly are lice? What's the best way to avoid them? And if you or your child does get them -- how do you get rid of them?

Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*) are essentially low-rent vampires. An individual louse, from a community of lice, feeds on human blood from your scalp 5 to 6 times a day in order to survive. And, they are uniquely adapted for living in human head hair. In other words... they need *you!*

Lice have been around for millions of years. Dried up lice, and their eggs, have been found on the hair of Egyptian mummies! Lice infestations commonly occur in kids 3 to 11 years old, with transmission occurring most frequently due to head-to-head contact... and less frequently via fomites (exposed objects, or materials, like clothing)... but it does happen.

A common misconception is that infestation is linked to personal hygiene - and that dirty hair attracts lice. In fact, it seems, lice may actually prefer clean hair to dirty hair. Though infestation rates are not reliably recorded, it is estimated that 6 to 12 million individuals are infested annually in the United States.

Things You Will Learn

1. How often do lice eat?
2. How do lice attach themselves to a person? (They can't fly or jump... but they do crawl & hide!)
3. Do lice only live on your head?

Activities

1. Need a to talk to your kids about lice? [Here](#) are some activities and suggestions on what to do if lice invade your home.
2. This activity from Brain Pop will help remind kids not to share their hats and other personal items:
Thinking Hats
Have your students make a top hat out of construction paper. They can take a long rectangular piece of paper and tape or staple it into a tube. Then they can glue a brim

around the bottom. Have students decorate their hats and write tips about lice prevention. Discuss tips together such as never sharing hats and helmets with friends and bringing their own pillows to sleepovers. Post the hats in the room so students can see each other's work, but remind them not to try on other people's hats!

Additional Resources

Did your kids come home with extra visitors? The [CDC](#) has some steps you can take to get rid of them.

Kid News

Have you ever been to a really big city like New York or London? They are huge! Now, imagine a piece of ice, called an iceberg as big as one of those cities, 500ft. thick! Recently, an iceberg called A74 broke off from Antarctica. Scientists have been expecting it to break off for some time but once it started to go, it only took a few hours for the iceberg to split from the main glacier A74 is so big, it can be seen from space! You can read more about this amazing piece of science [here](#).¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com