

## **Tips on How to Treat Head Lice**

Understandably, parents get very anxious when they hear about their children's exposure to head lice.

Head lice is not necessarily associated with poor hygiene. Even if a person is matriculate about personal hygiene, head lice infestation is still possible if there is close contact with another person with lice.

One common issue is over-treatment.

Because of the anxiety the diagnosis generates, parents sometimes opt to treat with over-the-counter products even if there is no evidence of active lice infestation. "Better to be safe than sorry."

Or, for those with active lice, some parents offer multiple treatments within the same week, in the hope of a more complete cure.

Over-treatment sometimes leads to a larger issue -- the lice developing drug resistance.

The diagnosis is clear if live bugs are seen. Usually, in the early stages, there are only a couple of lice on the same person, and they can be very difficult to find.

If the child is not itching the scalp at all, if the scalp looks perfectly normal without scratch marks or redness or sores, then the likelihood of head lice is much lower. No treatment is recommended.

Nits are often confused with other benign scalp lesions, like dandruff.

If the white lesions come off easily, then they are probably not nits.

If the nits are found more than 1/4 inch from the scalp, then they are almost always dead or already hatched, and treatment is not necessary.

When using over-the-counter products such as Nix and Rid, it is important to remember to re-treat in a week, but not earlier than that.

When in doubt, it is better to clarify the diagnosis with a health care professional before proceeding with treatment.