

A Katy Parent's Guide to the New Super Lice

Local experts share the warning signs, popular myths, and best treatments for head lice

Written by Kennan Buckner

A strain of appropriately named “super lice” is causing frustration for concerned parents. These bugs are proving resistant to most over-the-counter methods and can cost hundreds of dollars to treat.

“The main warning sign of lice is that a child is continually scratching at their head, mainly behind the ears and the base of the neck,” says Discovery Schoolhouse director Dawn M. Tejero. While scratching is a common sign, the itching associated with head lice is caused by an allergic reaction to the lice saliva and some kids do not experience a reaction. “Therefore, they may have lice and never itch,” says Penny Warner, RN, NE-BC and president of The Lice Place.

Known Causes

The spread of lice is typically through head-to-head contact. “It is important to teach children not to share personal belongings such as combs, brushes, hair accessories, hats, or towels,” says Dr. Kay Leaming-Van Zandt assistant medical director of the emergency center at Texas Children’s Hospital West Campus. Children with long hair should keep it pulled back in a ponytail or braids. Experts remind parents that it’s not about a lack of cleanliness or poor hygiene.

“Most children have lice about four to six weeks before it’s discovered,” says Warner. “By that time, you’re now dealing with a full blown infestation, and it has most likely spread to others.”

Best Treatments

Most over-the-counter and prescription treatments require application of the product, a lather and rinse, and then a combing to remove nits. Typically, experts suggest users repeat the process one week later. “Unless your pediatrician recommends a prescribed medication, most children can be safely and effectively treated with an OTC medication containing 1% permethrin (i.e., Nix Crème Rinse) or pyrethrin plus piperonyl butoxide (i.e., Rid Lice Killing Shampoo),” says Dr. Leaming-Van Zandt.

Prevention Tips

Since lice are not a seasonal problem, parents should remain vigilant about head checking. If a child does become infected with lice, parents should be careful to ensure it does not spread to other members of the family. “Head lice is most common among preschool children attending daycare, elementary school children, and the household

members of infected children,” says Dr. Leaming-Van Zandt.

Experts recommend washing anything that’s been in contact with the child’s head or hair such as bedding, hats, scarves, coats, or towels in hot water. Also soak combs, brushes, and hair accessories in soapy, hot water to prevent the spread of lice. You might also vacuum car seats, couches, or other furniture. As a precaution, parents should place non-washable stuffed toys in sealed plastic bags for two weeks. **KM**

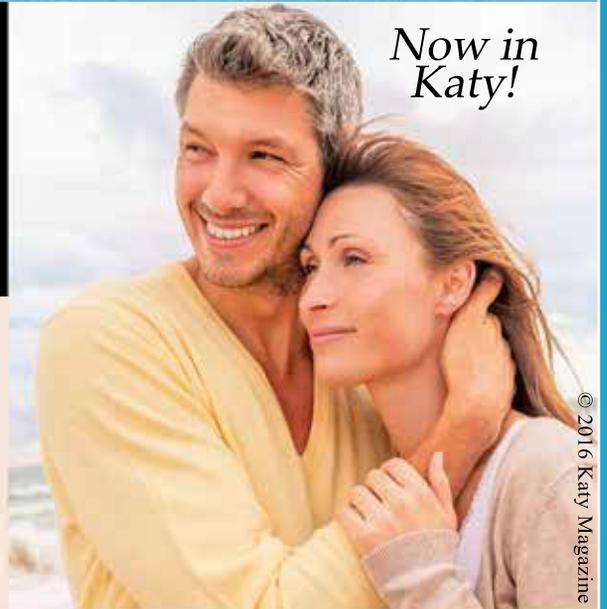


Warning Signs

- *Itching on the scalp
- *A tickling feeling of something moving on the head
- *Body sores that develop from scratching
- *Irritability and difficulty sleeping
- *Red bumps on the head, neck, shoulders, or pubic area

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