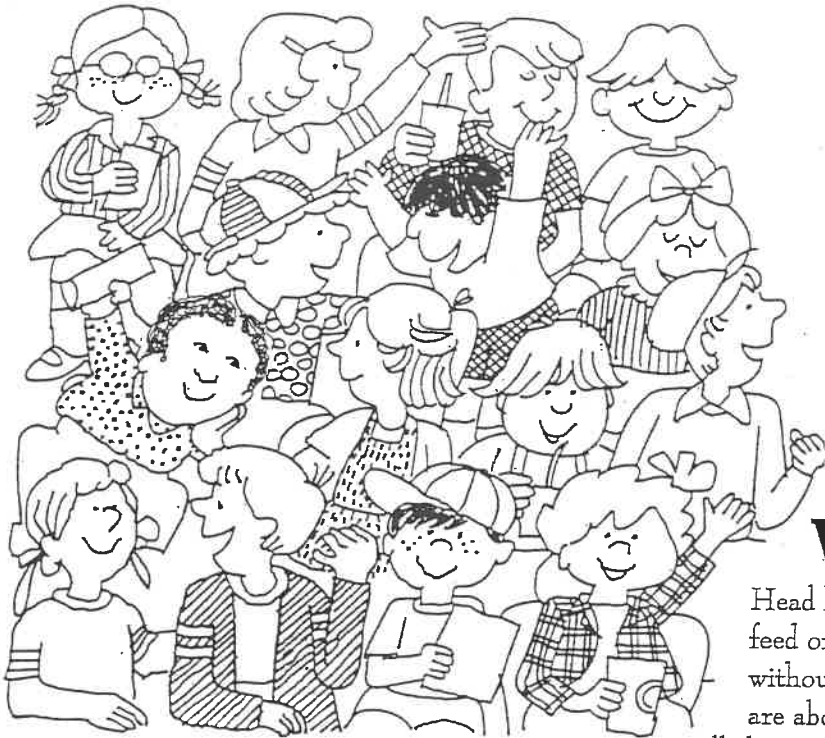


Simple answers about a common problem: Head Lice



WHAT are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insects that live on the human scalp and feed on human blood. Head lice can survive for one week without food, and live 7-10 days away from humans. They are about the size of a sesame seed. They hatch from eggs, called NITS, which the female lice attach to individual human hairs usually at the base of the hair. Nits are extremely tiny, yellowish or grayish white and tear drop shaped. They are very firmly attached and will not wash out or blow away. The nits hatch in about 7-10 days. Eggs can live 10 days away from humans.

WHO can get head lice?

Absolutely anyone can get head lice. It doesn't matter if you are young or old, black or white, girl or boy, rich or poor, or even if you wash your hair two times every day. Getting head lice is not a sign of uncleanness or poor health habits. Head lice don't just infest "other" people...they can infest you or anyone in your family. You shouldn't panic or be embarrassed if you get them. But you should learn how to identify a head lice infestation, how to treat it, and how to prevent it from coming back!

HOW could my child get head lice?

Head lice can only crawl; they cannot fly or jump from person to person. They are usually passed from child to child through direct personal contact or the sharing of personal items. Children love to share things such as hats, combs, hair ribbons or jackets with their friends. Sharing things with a person who already has head lice means they'll probably share the head lice as well! Sharing towels or pillowcases can also spread lice at home. One common myth is that you can catch head lice from grass, trees or animals. You can't, they live off humans. Another false belief is that you can only get head lice in the summer or only if you have long hair. The most suitable temperature for the life cycle is 89.6°F.



WHAT should I look for?

Severe, persistent itching of the head and the back of the neck are good indications. This may lead to scalp or skin irritation/abrasions, as well as result in infections. The lice are hard to see because they move quickly and don't like bright light, so concentrate on looking for the nits. The nits can be seen with the naked eye, but a magnifying