



Unit 4 Lesson 5: An Ounce of Prevention

Hey! A Flea Bit Me!

Handout 4



What a Flea Is

A flea is a small (no bigger than the head of a pin) brown bug with a hard shell. Fleas have tiny claws at the ends of their legs to help them attach to people or other warm-blooded animals and drink their blood.

If you have a dog or cat, chances are pretty good that you've seen a flea. Fleas are often found on the coats of these animals. Once the animal comes inside, the fleas can then jump onto people or carpeting.

What a Flea Bite Looks and Feels Like

If a person gets bitten by a flea, the bite will feel itchy. Flea bites usually occur in groups of three or four bites on the body, and they look like tiny red bumps. A lot of kids end up with flea bites when they play with their dogs or cats.

What You Should Do

If you think you've been bitten by a flea, wash the bite with soap and water. Put on some calamine lotion to help with the itching, or an adult can find an anti-itch cream at the drugstore for you. Try not to scratch the bites too much, because this can make the bites become infected.

What a Doctor Will Do

If you get an infection from scratching flea bites, a doctor will need to prescribe medication to clear up the infection.

How to Avoid Getting Bitten

The best way to avoid getting bitten by fleas is to keep the fleas off your pets. Cats and dogs can be bathed in special flea-control shampoo. Your pet can wear a flea collar or take medication once a year which will also help keep fleas away. In addition, a professional exterminator can treat your home or yard with flea-control chemicals to keep the flea population down. Wearing an insect repellent also may help. Ask your parents to apply one that contains 10% to 30% DEET.

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