



Head lice are **very small, flat, wingless insects with three pairs of legs, each having delicate hooks**. These hooks help the louse move about the scalp or hair shaft. This keeps them from being brushed or washed out. **Lice cannot jump, leap, or fly!** They do move very rapidly on the scalp, hair or skin. The lice eggs (called nits) are tear drop shaped and are the size of a typewritten comma (1mm long) and vary in color from yellowish-brown to silvery white. **Nits are attached to the hair strand with a stubborn, waterproof cement-like substance and cannot be easily removed.** The average number of lice on a head is 10-15 and the incubation period for eggs to hatch is 7-10 days. Lice cannot live at temperatures below 72° F. or above 125° F.



How are head lice spread?

Lice are passed from person-to-person by direct head to head contact. Nits (lice eggs) may be found on shared personal items (i.e. combs, brushes, hats, pillows, sports headgear, jackets and other clothing). **Lice do not jump or fly.** They crawl and can fall off the head. Head lice do not live longer than 24 hours off the head. A louse off the head is a dying louse. A louse will only lay nits while on the head. Fallen hair carries the nit wherever it lands (i.e. furniture, carpeting or bedding, upholstered couches, chairs, and car seats, etc.). Nits hatch in 7 to 10 days and develop into an adult in another 7 to 10 days which can then lay more eggs. Since anti-lice shampoos don't usually kill nits, you usually have to retreat the child with lice in 7 to 10 days to kill any newly hatched head lice and break this lice life cycle. Nits that hatch after they have fallen off the head will die without a blood meal. Lice do not spread to or from pets or birds.

What are the symptoms of head lice?

Head lice cause itching of the scalp and neck which begins 3-4 days after lice exposure. A louse must have a blood supply to live. Tiny red blood spots (louse bite marks) on the scalp are also a sign of lice. The nits are "glued" to the hair within ½ inch from the scalp. They are often found at the back of the head and behind the ears. Using a magnifying glass will help spot lice or nits.

Prevention of head lice

Frequently check your child's hair, especially after close contact with other children. Encourage children not to share hair care items, towels, clothing, hats, sports headgear, and head phones. Avoid sharing personal items where possible. Each child should have his or her own comb and brush. When new cases are discovered and treated promptly, the child will be less likely to have recurrent problems and miss fewer days of school. Check every member of the family when one member has head lice. Any family members with lice or nits must be treated.

UPON RETURN TO SCHOOL

Parents are asked to accompany their child to school for re-inspection, by school staff, before he or she may re-enter school. The student will **not** be permitted to return to school if live lice are found. **The parent must continue to treat and remove all nits. Every 7 to 10 days, the nits hatch and live lice will be present again.**

Two days per total episode are considered excused absences, all other days missed will follow the truancy policy.

Treatment- Shampooing MAY NOT kill the nits (eggs), only removal from the hair shaft will prevent hatching and repeated episodes of crawling lice.

1. Remove all nits.
2. A second treatment in seven days to kill any new lice may be needed.
Do not retreat more than once with this product or other medicated products.
3. Do not use hair conditioners, detanglers, hair spray or gel for at least a week after treatment. If you wash the hair during this time, use a shampoo that does not contain conditioners.

Head Lice Treatment - Options

- You may use prescription strength or over the counter treatments. These are Pesticides-Follow the directions very closely!
- Home or herbal remedies maybe used at the parent's discretion.

Important Steps to Remember when using a lice killing commercial product

- Do treatment over sink or bend over bathtub. ***Wash the head only.***
- Use a different towel for each step of the treatment and for each person treated. Wash and dry all towels immediately after use. High heat of dryer kills lice.
- Inspect the hair of the treated person nightly for at least two weeks following the last treatment looking for signs and symptoms of head lice.
- After treatment with a louse killing treatment, it may take up to 24 hours for lice to die. If lice are still alive two days after treatment, try a non-medicated treatment option until safe to use commercial product again.

Additional Common Items Needed For All Treatment Options

- Clean towels
- Hair pins can be used to pin back hair.
- Hair comb (lice comb)
- Shampoo that does not contain conditioner
- Nit comb-Some people prefer to slide nits off the hair using their fingernails.
- Tissue
- Hair dryer
- Select a comfortable area with strong overhead lighting.
- A television program or videotape can help the child sit quietly.

Nit Removal

Nit removal is the key to successful head lice treatment. The only way to be sure that lice won't come back is to pick out all nits. Since they are very small and hard to see, keep checking for nits on a daily basis after initial treatment.

- Nits are cemented to the hair shaft.
- Usually nits are found close to the scalp at the nape of the neck, around the ears and crown.
- Apply nit removal product as directed in the treatment option you have chosen.

Combing Out the Nits

- Divide hair into one inch sections with hair pins.
- Hold each section at hair's end and comb as close to scalp as possible.



- Wipe comb with tissue to remove nits.
- Comb repeatedly until **all** nits are gone.
- You can manually remove the nits with your fingernails but be careful to place the eggs into a tissue and discard.
- Inspect thin section of each hair segment.
- Pin back clean sections as you go.

Clean Up and Follow Up

- Dispose of used tissues.
- Soak all nit combs, hair combs, brushes and other hair care items in very hot water (110 degrees F) for 15 minutes.

Remove Lice from the Environment

Lice do not survive off the human head for more than 24-48 hours. Therefore, cleaning activities should be focused on recently used clothing, towels, bedding and home furnishings used by the person with lice.

- **Remove** all bedding and wash sheets, pillowcase, blankets, towels, clothing, underwear and nightclothes in hot soapy water. Change bedding frequently.
- **Machine-wash** all washable clothing and bed linens that have come in contact with the person with lice. Washable items (including coats, caps, backpacks and hair care supplies) must be washed in hot water (130 degrees F) or dried in a hot dryer for at least 20 minutes before reusing.
- **Clean** all combs, brushes, hair accessories and similar items in hot soapy water.
- **Simple vacuuming is the most effective way to get rid of lice in the home.**
- **Vacuum** the carpets, upholstered furniture, and car seats. Items which cannot be washed, dried or vacuumed can be dry cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for four days.
- The U.S. Public Health Service no longer recommends fumigating or using insecticides in the home, school or school buses. **Louse sprays are not recommended.**

Follow-up and Repeat

Nits are hard to see and remove. Chances are a few nits will remain after treatment. They will hatch in 7-10 days from being laid on the hair shaft. For this reason, it is important to repeat treatment after one week to remove or kill any newly hatched nits or surviving lice. Some medicated treatment methods should not be used more than once. Stubborn lice cases that don't respond to treatment despite following direction may require a visit to the pediatrician or family practitioner for intervention.