

Quick Guide for Managing Head Lice

What are head lice?

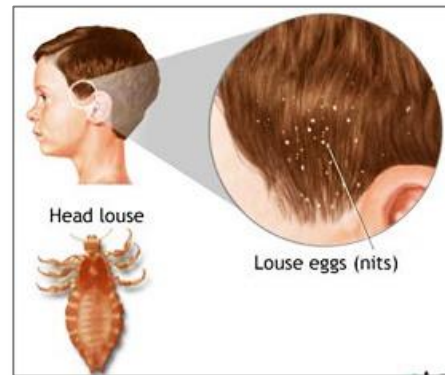
- Lice are tiny insects (about the size of sesame seeds) ranging in color from red to brown, yellow, tan, gray, white or black.
- Lice attach their eggs (nits) to the hair shaft near the scalp with a glue-like substance.
- They do not jump or fly, but crawl from hair to hair and feed on blood from scalp bites.

What are nits?



- Nits are the tiny, smooth, plump, teardrop shaped eggs of lice.
- Nits are small, about the size of a knot of thread, and can be white, tan, pale gray, or yellow in color.
- Unlike dandruff and other matter, they are strongly glued to the hair shaft, often close to the scalp.
- Nits are most commonly found at the nape of the neck and behind the ears, but can be anywhere, so check the entire head.

- Nits hatch in 7-10 days.
- Nits can be hard to see, so it is important to take your time and separate the hair into thin sections.



Do they cause disease?

- No. Head lice do not spread disease. Many children have no itching. However, lice can cause severe itching due to sensitivity to louse saliva. Skin infections may occur from scratching.

How do you get head lice?

Anyone can get head lice, rich or poor, clean or dirty. Head lice can be passed from one person to another in a number of ways.

- Head to head contact.
- Sharing personal items like combs, brushes, towels and bedding.
- Sharing clothing such as hats, coats, scarves, ribbons and hair decorations.
- Placing heads on furniture, rugs or car seats recently used by someone with lice.
- Head lice are not a risk to pets or other animals



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What are signs and symptoms to look for?



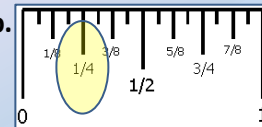
- Itching of the head, especially around the ears and the back of the neck.
 - Tickling feeling of something moving in the hair.
 - Irritability and difficulty sleeping: head lice are most active in the dark.
 - Sores on the head from scratching. These sores can sometimes become infected with bacteria found on the person's skin.
 - Nits. Small white specks in the hair such as dandruff can be confused with nits. Dandruff can be easily removed, while nits are glued strongly to the hair.
- Adult lice may or may not be seen. Because they are very small, move quickly and avoid light, they can be difficult to find.

What should I do if I suspect head lice?

- Treat with a medicated hair product that will kill the lice (a pediculicide). Pediculicides are not meant to be used for prevention.
 - Most non-prescription pediculicidal products contain permethrin 1% or pyrethrin (such as Nix or RID). Permethrin 1% is recommended as the first choice of treatment.
 - It is important that you follow the label directions on the product **EXACTLY** to treat those who are infested.
 - Review all safety statements on the label.
 - Do not use the product if any of the precautions apply to you or the person being treated.
- Treat only those people with live lice or nits less than one quarter inch from the scalp.
- Nits that are one quarter inch from the scalp are considered viable eggs and should be removed after treatment.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends treating anyone who shares the same bed with those who are infested.
- Prescription pediculicides are also available.
- For further information on pediculicidal products contact your healthcare provider.



A person is considered infested with head lice if live lice or nits are on the hair shaft closer than one quarter inch from the scalp.



All individuals living with an infested person, as well as those who have head-to-head contact with the person, should be screened for lice.

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Cleaning of Personal Items and the Environment

- Machine wash all washable clothing and bedding used in the last 2 days with hot water at 130 degrees for at least 10 minutes, and then dry items on high heat for at least 30 minutes. Please remember to also wash hats, coats and scarves.
 - Washing clothes to remove lice and nits is only necessary on the day of treatment and does not need to be repeated daily.
- Items that are not washable should be dry-cleaned or stored in tightly sealed plastic bags for **at least** 14 days at room temperature or for 24 hours in below freezing temperatures. This includes stuffed animals and other stuffed toys.
- Combs, brushes and hair ornaments used by the infected person should be immersed in water hotter than 130 degrees F, Lysol, rubbing alcohol or a pediculicide for one hour.
 - Heat may damage some plastic combs and brushes.
- Floors, carpets, upholstered furniture, pillows, and mattresses should be vacuumed to pick up any hairs that may have living lice or nits attached to them.
- No special cleansers, sprays, or chemicals are needed for cleaning your home.



The above steps need to be done **immediately after the first hair shampooing and again if a second shampoo is part of the treatment.**

Repeat treatment with the pediculicidal product following the label instructions. If the label does not provide a guide for a second treatment, repeat the treatment nine days following the initial treatment.

The use of lice sprays for the house can be dangerous and is not recommended.

Can head lice be prevented?

Measures can be taken to lessen the risk of getting head lice.

- ✓ Items such as combs, brushes, hats, scarves and clothing that have contact with the head should not be shared.
- ✓ Hats should be placed in sleeves or pockets of coats and jackets when not being worn.
- ✓ To prevent the spread of lice if found:
 - Check all family members
 - Notify school
 - Notify parents of children's playmates
- ✓ Shampooing with a head lice shampoo **will not** prevent someone from getting head lice.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR PARENTS

Students with lice are expected to be treated at home after school and return to the Board of Education the next morning for re-examination by the Health Aide.