If you have questions, contact your local health department or clinic



Edmund G. Brown Jr., Governor
State of California

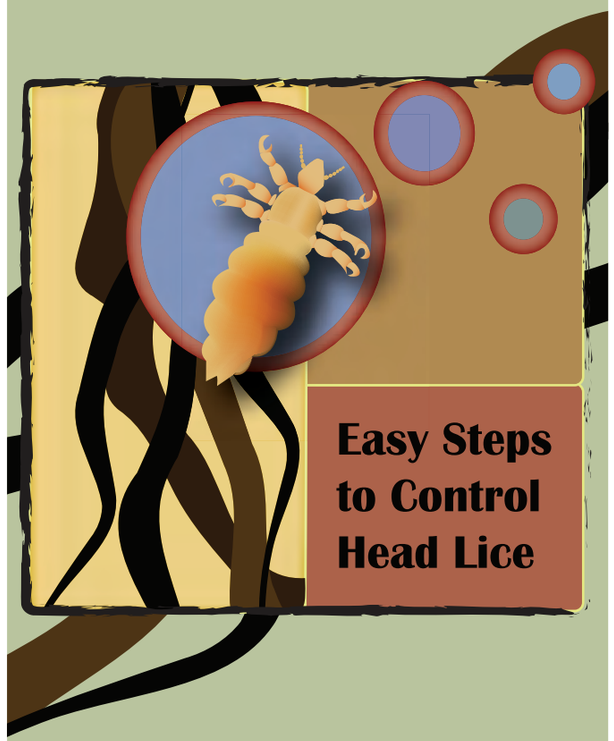
Diana S. Dooley, Secretary
Health and Human Services Agency

Ron Chapman, MD, MPH, Director
California Department of Public Health

California Department of Public Health
Vector-Borne Disease Section
(916) 552-9730, VBDS@cdph.ca.gov
www.cdph.ca.gov

2012

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO HEAD LICE



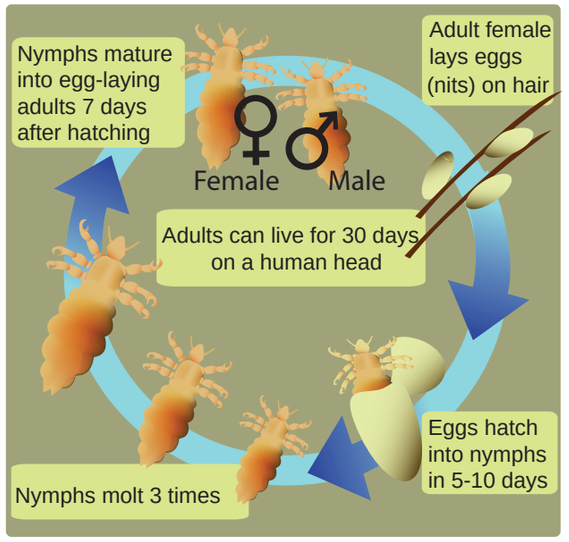
What are head lice?

Head lice are small insects that live in people's hair and feed on their blood. Lice glue their eggs, or "nits," to hair.

Head lice die quickly (within two days) without feeding so they cannot live very long away from your child's head.

Eggs take six to nine days to hatch, and seven or more days for the lice to become egg-laying adults.

Development of Head Lice



How do people get head lice?

Children can give head lice to other children from head-to-head contact and when they share combs, hats, clothing, barrettes, helmets, scarves, headphones, or other personal items.

Head lice are a problem in homes, day care centers, elementary, and preschools. Children are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school.

How do I know if my child has lice?

The only way to know if your child has lice is to look through their hair. If your child has head lice, their scalp might be itchy.

Don't confuse dirt or dandruff with eggs (nits). Eggs stick on the hair.

How can I get rid of my child's lice?

Nit combing and removal

If your child has head lice, a good way to get rid of the lice is to comb their hair every day with a nit comb for two weeks.

Nit combs should be metal (not plastic) and have long teeth. Several brands of nit combs are available at your local pharmacy.

A good example is the LiceMeister®* metal comb that costs about $10. Metal flea combs found at pet stores may be used as well.

The best way to remove eggs is to part the hair into small sections. As each section is combed, fasten the hair to the scalp to keep track of what has been combed. It is easier to comb wet hair.



Any eggs that cannot be combed out must be removed. You can do this by picking them out with fingernails or by cutting a single hair between the scalp and where eggs are attached.

Check all family members' hair completely. Common places to find lice are close to the scalp, the neckline, and behind the ears.



Treatments



Permethrin (Nix®*) or pyrethrin are the active ingredients in most over-the-counter head lice treatments.

Benzyl Alcohol lotions (5%) such as Ulesfia®* can be prescribed to kill lice on children 6 months and older.

Ivermectin (0.5%) treatments such as Sklice®* can be prescribed to kill eggs and lice in children 6 months of age and above.

Spinosad (0.9%) treatments such as Natroba®* can be prescribed to kill both lice and eggs on children above 4 years old.

The Lousebuster®* is a device that delivers heated air at high flow to the scalp to kill lice and eggs.

VERY IMPORTANT TREATMENT INFORMATION:

- **Follow the label directions carefully.**
- **Treat only people who have head lice.**
- **Do not leave the product on for a longer time than recommended; it will not kill the lice faster.**



- **Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or rinse between people.**
- **Even after treatment, you should remove eggs daily with a metal nit or flea comb until all eggs are completely removed.**
- **Wait at least seven to ten days before treating someone for a second time if they still have lice. During this seven to ten day period, continue to remove any lice and eggs found.**

What if the treatment did not work?

Here are a few reasons the treatment might not have worked:

- The directions on the treatment product were not followed closely enough.
- The nits were not completely removed.
- The child got head lice again from a playmate.
- Lice may not die right away.
- The problem was not lice.

There is NO proof that the following products work:

- Vinegar
- Compounds that say they dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal."
- Mayonnaise
- Olive oil
- Tea tree oil



Here are a few other things you can do to get rid of the lice or nits in your home

- Wash clothing and bedding in hot water (130°F) then dry on a hot cycle for at least 20 minutes.



- Seal items in a plastic bag for two weeks to kill lice because they cannot get a blood meal.
- Boil combs, brushes, hair bands, and barrettes in water for five minutes, or soak them in rubbing alcohol or Lysol®* for one hour.
- Vacuum carpets and furniture.



* Use of this product name does not imply commercial endorsement by the California Department of Public Health.