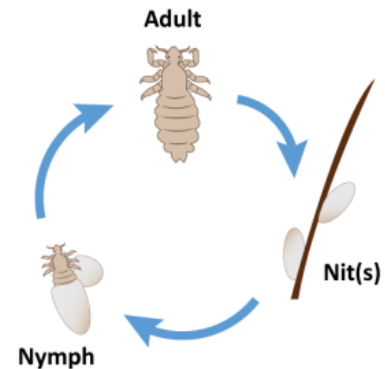


## Head Lice: Fact Sheet

Head lice are tiny, wingless insects that can attach to a person's hair, where it feeds on tiny amounts of blood drawn from the scalp. Head lice, while annoying, aren't dangerous and they don't spread disease. Head lice infestations are not related to cleanliness and can occur at home, school, or in the community.

### Head lice have three different life stages:

1. Nits - tiny, oval eggs that are glued to the Hair. Nits are yellow or white.
2. Nymphs - immature lice that become full Grown in 9-12 days and must feed on a person's blood to live
3. Adult lice - full-grown lice are about the size of a sesame seed and are tan or grayish white. Adult head lice must feed on blood and will die within 1-2 days if removed from a person's head.



### How do people get head lice?

- People get head lice from head-to-head contact with a person who has head lice. Although less common, head lice can also spread by sharing combs, hats, helmets, clothing, and other personal items that come in contact with the head.
- Head lice are more likely to spread among children at home, daycare, or at a friend's house than at school.

### Where are head lice found?

- Head lice are usually found on the scalp, especially behind the ears and near the neckline.
- Head lice glue nits on the hair shaft. Nits found closer to the head (less than 1/4" from the scalp) usually contain lice that will eventually hatch. Nits located further from the scalp are usually empty or dead.

### How do I know if my child or I have head lice?

- You may visualize nits stuck to the hair near the scalp and/or lice crawling through the hair. Nits should not be confused with dandruff, which can easily be brushed away.
- A person with head lice may have a tickling feeling in their hair or an itchy scalp. Intense scratching may also occur.
- Children may be irritable and have difficulty sleeping since lice are most active at night.

***The best way to prevent head lice is to avoid touching heads with someone who has head lice.*** You may not be able to tell if someone has head lice or not, so it is best practice to not share personal items that could spread lice from person to person, such as hats, towels, helmets, headphones, etc.

### Head lice have been found in my child's hair. Now what?

- Check the hair of everyone in your household to see if they have head lice.
- Over-the-counter products and medications prescribed by a doctor are available to treat head lice. *Contact your healthcare provider for guidance on what product should be used.*
  - Follow the label directions carefully.
  - Only treat people who have head lice.
  - Do not leave the product on for a longer time than recommended.
  - Each person with head lice needs a single, complete treatment. Do not share shampoo between people.
  - Everyone in the home with head lice needs to be treated on the same day.
- ***Not all products kill nits, and retreatment is often needed 7-10 days after the first treatment, when nits hatch and more head lice are found.***
- **Important:** Comb the hair in-between treatments to remove nits. Use a metal nit comb that has long teeth (several brands are available at the pharmacy.)
  - Hair should be combed every 2-3 days for two weeks or until nits are no longer found. The goal is to remove any nits that can hatch new lice.
  - It is easier to comb wet hair that has been parted into small sections. Each section of hair should be combed from root to tip. If lice or nits are found, wipe or rinse the comb before using it again.

### Treatment doesn't seem to be working. What's wrong?

- The problem may not be head lice.
- The label directions for treatment were not followed properly.
- Lice may be resistant to some lice treatment products.
- You might have gotten head lice again.
- ***Important:*** *It takes 8-12 hours for some products to kill head lice. If lice are still active after this time, the product may not be working. Do not retreat until speaking with your doctor.*

### Are there other treatment options for head lice? Do I need to treat my home for lice?

- There is no proof that vinegar, mayonnaise, olive oil, tea tree oil, or products that say they dissolve the glue on the nits to "ease their removal" actually work.
- Do not fumigate the house.
- To get rid of lice in the home follow these steps:
  - Wash clothing, bedding, and other items used by the person with head lice with hot water (>130°F), then dry on the hottest cycle.
  - Dry clean any clothing, linens, and stuffed animals that are not machine washable, or place in a sealed plastic bag and stored for two weeks.
  - Place combs, brushes, hair bands, and hair clips in hot water (>130°F) for 5-10 minutes.
  - Vacuum carpets and furniture in areas where the person sat or laid down.

### Sources (and for more information visit):

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html#print>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/head-lice.html>