

What does head lice look

like? Since adult lice are the size of a sesame seed (2-3mm), head lice can be seen by the human eye. They live in human hair, draw blood from the skin, and lay eggs (called nits) on the hair shaft. Live nits are found less than 1/2 inch from the scalp and most often on hair at the back of the head in the neck region. Some children with lice complain of itchiness but many have no symptoms.

Is your child at risk? Yes. Head lice will spread as long as children play together. They spread almost completely through human hair to hair contact, and pets do not spread lice. Anyone can get head lice. Children in child care, preschools, elementary or middle schools are at risk. Head lice are NOT a sign of being dirty. Head lice are not dangerous and DO NOT spread diseases.

What can you do? Parents are the key to looking for and treating head lice! The Iowa Department of Public Health advises parents to spend 15 minutes each week on each child carefully looking for head lice or nits. Persons with nits within 1/4 inch of the scalp OR live lice should be treated. Careful use of a nit comb can potentially remove all lice. Each child should have his or her own comb or brush. Teach your child NOT to share hats, scarves, brushes, combs, and hair fasteners

HEAD LICE

Treatment Calendar

- **Day 1** Medicated Shampoo per directions.
- **Day 2** COMB only DO NOT WASH
- **Day 3** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 4** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 5** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 6** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 7** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 8** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 9** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 10** Medicated Shampoo per directions.
- **Day 11** COMB only DO NOT WASH
- **Day 12** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 13** Shampoo, condition and COMB
- **Day 14** Shampoo, condition and COMB

14 Day Treatment Guidelines

- ✓ The treatment days are scheduled to interrupt the lifecycle of the insect. A nit comb should be used to comb the hair and can be bought at most pharmacies or from your school nurse.
- ✓ **Day 1:** Use an over the counter or prescription product as directed.
- ✓ **Day 2:** COMB hair carefully for 10 minutes from the scalp to the end of the hair. Do not wash hair today.
- ✓ **Days 3-9:** Wash the hair using your regular shampoo. Rinse. Apply hair conditioner to make the hair slippery. COMB the hair the entire length from the scalp to end of hair. Wipe the comb between each stroke with a paper towel, which removes any lice or nits. Keep hair wet while combing. COMB all hair for at least 10 minutes.
- ✓ **Day 10:** Use an over-the-counter medicated head-lice shampoo. (to kill any lice that hatched since the previous medication use) Read and follow all directions on the shampoo.
- ✓ **Day 11:** COMB hair carefully for at least 10 minutes from the scalp to the end of the hair. Do not wash hair today.
- ✓ **Days 12-14:** Wash the hair using regular shampoo. Rinse. Apply hair conditioner to make the hair slippery. COMB the hair the entire length from the scalp to the end of hair. Wipe the comb between each stroke with a paper towel, which removes any lice or nits. Keep hair wet while combing. COMB all hair for at least 10 minutes.

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Additional Tips

Treat all family members who have lice at the same time. Use the 14-day treatment process. Rinse combs and brushes in very hot water after each use, and between people.

Only ordinary house cleaning, vacuuming, and washing bedding and clothes in hot water are needed. No special effort or sprays are needed to clean your home. Only dead or dying lice are found on clothing, bedding, or furniture.

Use of oils, mayonnaise, lotions, creams, and vinegar has not proven effective; kerosene, gasoline and similar products do not work and are dangerous.

What about school?

Children can return to school as soon as treatment is started. Call the school to inform the school nurse. She will ask you about your student's close contacts and assess those students for head lice. Your student will be discretely monitored for three weeks.



What if treatment does not work?

- 1) **Wrong diagnosis** – dandruff, hair products, dust, and other objects can seem like nits (the white eggs) and other insects can look like lice
- 2) **Timing** – the lice may take a few days to die; nits alone do not mean the child still has lice, look for crawling lice
- 3) **Poor treatment** – directions on the treatment product were not correctly followed
- 5) **Resistance to treatment** – some lice are not killed by the chemicals in the over-the-counter treatments (permethrin and pyrethrin)
- 6) **New lice** – child got head lice again from playmate or family member

After the 14 day treatment, if crawling lice are still present, contact your healthcare provider who may recommend a prescription treatment for lice such as Ivermectin.

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Simple 14-Day Treatment Schedule

