

What are head lice?

Head lice are parasitic insects that feed on human blood several times a day and live close to the human scalp. Head lice are common among school-aged children, do not cause disease, and are not a public health hazard.

Who is affected by head lice?

Head lice are most commonly spread by direct head-to-head contact. According to AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) most cases of head lice are acquired outside of school. Indirect spread through contact with brushes, hats, or combs are rare since lice found on these items are usually injured or dead and lice survive for less than 24 hours away from the warmth of a human scalp. Lice do not fly since they are not winged and are not able to jump due to feet specially adapted to grasp hair follicles. The louse's specially adapted feet make holding onto smooth surfaces like plastic, metal or other similar materials very difficult (i.e. helmets or headphones). Prevention is focused on avoiding head-to-head contact and by **prompt treatment of infested persons.**

Symptoms of head lice may include:

- Persistent itching of the scalp
- Sores on the head caused by itching
- Nits (eggs) near root of hair, concentrated behind ears and at nape of neck
- Live lice noted on scalp

What to do if live lice are found?

Treatment for head lice is recommended for persons diagnosed with an active infestation. All household members and other close contacts should be checked; those persons with evidence of an active infestation should be treated.

Treatment:

We recommend you consult with a licensed medical provider for treatment if you suspect someone in your household has head lice. Should you decide to use an over-the-counter treatment, the CDC recommends you select an FDA approved product since most home remedies have not been proven to be safe or effective. You should follow manufacturer's instructions strictly and treat all household members suspected to have lice. Retreat according to product instructions (usually 7-9 days) and consider nit removal to decrease the chance of recurrence.

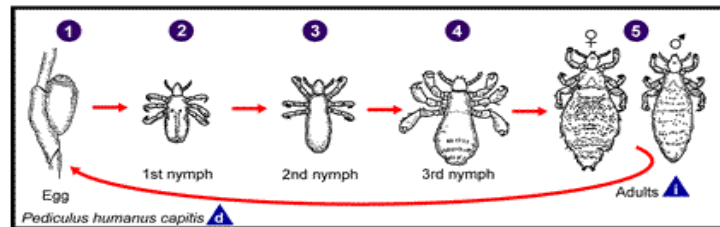
Helpful Hints:

- If the person with live lice has very long hair (longer than shoulder length), it may be necessary to use a second bottle.
- Pay special attention to instructions on label:
 - How long the medication should be left on the hair and how it should be washed
 - When to re-wash the hair after the lice medicine is removed
 - When to retreat (usually 7-9 days)
- Comb dead and any remaining lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit (head lice egg) comb
- If, after 8-12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found, do not retreat until speaking with your healthcare provider. A different treatment may be necessary.
- Nit combs are often found in lice medicine packages and should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair shaft.
- After each treatment, checking the hair and combing with a nit comb to remove nits and lice every 2-3 days may decrease the chance of recurrence.
- Continue to check for 2-3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.
- Retreatment is meant to kill any surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>

How can head lice be prevented?

The following are steps that can be taken to help prevent and control the spread of head lice:

- Avoid head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact during play and other activities at home, school, and elsewhere (sports activities, playground, slumber parties, camp). Do not share clothing such as hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, hair ribbons, or barrettes.
- Do not share combs, brushes, or towels. Disinfect combs and brushes used by an infested person by soaking them in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- Do not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infested person.
- Machine wash and dry clothing, bed linens, and other items that an infested person wore or used during the 2 days before treatment using the hot water (130°F) laundry cycle and the high heat drying cycle. Clothing and items that are not washable can be dry-cleaned OR sealed in a plastic bag and stored for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum the floor and furniture, particularly where the infested person sat or lay. However, spending much time and money on housecleaning activities is not necessary to avoid reinfestation by lice or nits that may have fallen off the head or crawled onto furniture or clothing.
- Do not use fumigant sprays or fogs; they are not necessary to control head lice and can be toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin.
- Additional information can be found at the CDC Prevention and Control site:
<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/prevent.html>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/biology.html>