

Head Lice: A Parents Guide

What Are Head Lice?

Head lice are small parasitic insects that live on the scalp and feed on human blood. They are spread primarily through direct head-to-head contact, especially among children.

Understanding transmission helps parents focus on prevention of close contact, rather than unnecessary environmental cleaning or blaming hygiene practices. Lice are not related to cleanliness, which helps reduce stigma.

Life Cycle Of Head Lice

Head lice develop in three stages:

- **Eggs (Nits):**
Laid at the base of the hair shaft near the scalp. They hatch in **7–10 days**.
- **Nymphs:**
Immature lice that mature into adults in about **7 days**.
- **Adults:**
Fully grown lice that can lay eggs daily and live up to **30 days** on the scalp.

Most chemical treatments **do not fully kill eggs (nits)**. This is why a **second treatment is critical**—to eliminate lice that hatch after the first treatment. Failure to understand this cycle is one of the most common reasons for treatment failure.

Follow the link for a proper demonstration on how to check for head lice:

<https://www.nixlice.com/how-to-check-for-lice>

Simply connect to the video using this QR code to watch the demonstration video.



Safety Considerations

- Follow product instructions exactly
- Do not use excessive amounts
- Do not combine multiple treatments
- Avoid repeated treatments earlier than recommended

Improper use can lead to skin irritation, toxicity, and decreased effectiveness. Overuse does not improve outcomes and may increase resistance.

Environmental Control

- Wash clothing and bedding used in the past **48 hours** in hot water
- Dry on high heat
- Vacuum furniture and floors

Lice survive **less than 1–2 days off the scalp**, and eggs cannot hatch without body heat. Therefore, extensive cleaning with harmful chemicals is unnecessary and not evidence-based.

Follow the link to see how to prevent head lice in your home:

<https://www.nixlice.com/how-to-check-for-lice/lice-prevention>

Simply scan the QR code to watch how to prevent head lice in your home:



What to Avoid

- Home remedies (e.g., oils, mayonnaise, gasoline)
- Treating with essential oils (e.g., spearmint, cinnamon, tea tree oil, seed oil, citronella)
- Insecticide sprays for the home
- Treating without confirmation of live lice

Treatment with Essential Oil Is **Not** Effective- As Shown By Evidence-Based Studies

Avoid marketing on the front of the box to try to lure you into buying “100 % guaranteed,” “super max,” “2x more effective.” Always check the box for active ingredients such as Ivermectin and Permethrin when purchasing over the counter.

Key Takeaways

- Head lice are common and not related to hygiene
- Use AAP-recommended chemical treatments first
- Always repeat treatment in 9–10 days
- Follow instructions carefully
- Focus on effective treatment, not over-cleaning

Resources

Parents can always refer to their **school nurse** for further head lice information, recommendations, and education.

Follow the link for more information on head lice management:

<https://www.sheboygan.k12.wi.us/resources/school-health-services>

Simply scan the QR code for direct link to Sheboygan Area School District webpage for Health Services on head lice management.

