

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE...

- Head lice (*Pediculus humanus capitis*) are tiny grey or brown insects that live on the human head. The adult organisms are about the size of a sesame seed. They feed by sucking minuscule amounts of blood from the scalp, where they also lay their eggs. Nits are the pearly eggs laid along a shaft of hair. Once they hatch, the empty eggshells remain attached to the hair. While they look a little like dandruff, nits stick tightly to hair, and are not easily brushed out.
- Head-to-head contact allows lice to crawl from one head to another -- or from one hat to the head it's on. Having head lice does not mean that someone is dirty. Lice do not care whether the head and hair are squeaky-clean or dirty. They are looking for human blood, which they need to survive.
- Lice do not spread disease. Nevertheless, parents are understandably distressed by the idea of insects crawling on their kids and sucking their blood. Having head lice can make the scalp extremely itchy; scratching can cause sores that can lead to infections. The fight to eradicate lice can take weeks.

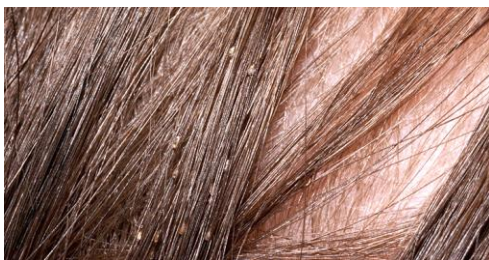
How do children bring home lice in the first place? How can you get rid of them? Get the answers below, and print out the illustrated instructions.

What head lice and nits look like and how they behave

Head lice actually crawl everywhere. They crawl from person to person and on to objects that come into contact with human hairs such as hats and towels. Because head lice crawl onto objects that have touched the human head, it is possible to get head lice by sharing everyday objects infested with lice such as hats, scarves, coats, hair accessories, brushes, combs, and towels. Resting your head on a bed, pillow, couch, chair, or rug that someone with head lice used is another way to get head lice. Head lice survive less than 1–2 days if they fall off a person and cannot feed; nits cannot hatch and usually die within a week if they are not kept at the same temperature as that found close to the human scalp.



Magnified picture of head lice on a fine tooth comb.



The eggs are yellow, brown, or tan and about the size of a pinhead. These seem glued to the hair. If the eggs have hatched, you will see clear shells.



Signs and symptoms of head lice :

- itchy scalp
- scratching of the scalp and/or back of neck
- crawling sensation on the hair or scalp
- seeing bugs on hair, skin, or clothing
- finding lice eggs (nits).
- swollen lymph nodes (glands) in the neck
- conjunctivitis -- a common eye infection called "pink eye"

Examining for head lice

DRY HAIR METHOD

This process will take 3-5 minutes, depending on hair length and treatment.

To be used for detection only -- not for treatment.

1. Check scalp: part hair in various places, check behind ears and at the nape of the neck -- look for sores or a rash where person has been scratching
2. Look for movement in the hair: unlikely to see the lice themselves -- they're very small, move quickly, and avoid light
3. Look for lice eggs (nits): tiny white or yellowish tear drop-shaped sacs are attached to the hair near the scalp (within a quarter inch if they haven't yet hatched); may be easier to feel than to see -- feel like grains of fine sand
 - Make sure the "nits" are really nits: hard to distinguish from dandruff or flakes of hair products; nits stick to the hair like glue while dandruff and other flakes are easily removed from the hair shaft
 - Make sure the nits you find are still alive: can only hatch in the warmth within ¼ inch of the scalp. After they hatch, the empty egg case remains attached to the hair and grows farther and farther from the scalp.

WET HAIR METHOD

This process will take 5-15 minutes, depending on hair length and thickness.

1. Wash the hair in the normal way with ordinary shampoo.
2. Rinse out the shampoo and put on lots of ordinary conditioner.
3. Comb the hair with a normal comb to get rid of tangles.
4. When the hair is untangled switch to a detection comb (lice comb). This is a special fine-toothed comb. The teeth of normal combs are too far apart.
5. Slot the teeth of the comb into the hair at the roots so it is touching the scalp.
6. Draw the comb through to the tips of the hair.
7. Make sure that all parts of the hair are combed by working around the head.
8. Check the comb for lice after each stroke. A magnifying glass may help.
 - Shaking the comb out into a plastic bowl after every swipe can help you see them better.
9. If you see any lice, clean the comb by wiping it on a tissue or rinse it before the next stroke.
10. After the whole head has been combed, rinse out the conditioner.
11. Repeat the combing procedure in the wet hair to check for any lice that might have been missed the first time.

Removing head lice from hair

NEEDED: over-the-counter head lice medication and detection comb (lice comb)

Bottles of medication or complete kits can be found at several area locations, including Stone Drugs, Albertson's SavOn Pharmacy, Kmart, and Smith's. More "organic" treatments are available at Jackson Whole Grocer (QuitNits) and Lucky's.

RID, NIX, and Vamousse are name brands, but generic/store brands are available (HealthMart, Smart Sense, GoodSense, LiceFree, Equaline).



- Before applying treatment, it may be helpful to remove clothing that can become wet or stained during treatment.
- Apply lice medicine, also called pediculicide, according to the instructions contained in the box or printed on the label. If the infested person has very long hair (longer than shoulder length), it may be necessary to use a second bottle. Pay special attention to instructions on the label or in the box regarding how long the medication should be left on the hair and how it should be washed out.
- Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner, or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not wash the hair for 1–2 days after the lice medicine is rinsed out. These measures may reduce the effectiveness of the lice medications.
- Pull the detection comb through from the scalp to the end the hair gently and slowly before rinsing.

When treating head lice

- Do not use extra amounts of any lice medication unless instructed to do so by your physician or pharmacist. The drugs used to treat lice are insecticides and can be dangerous if they are misused or overused.
- All the medications listed above should be kept out of the eyes. If they get onto the eyes, they should be immediately flushed away.
- Do not treat someone more than 2–3 times with the same medication if it does not seem to be working. This may be caused by using the medicine incorrectly or by resistance to the medicine. Always seek the advice of your health care provider if this should happen. He/she may recommend an alternative medication.
- Do not use different head lice drugs at the same time unless instructed to do so by your physician or pharmacist.

Getting rid of lice in the home

- Hats, scarves, pillow cases, bedding, clothing, and towels worn or used by the infested person in the 2-day period just before treatment is started can be machine washed and dried using the hot water and hot air cycles because lice and eggs are killed by exposure for 5 minutes to temperatures greater than 130°F.
- Soak combs and brushes in hot water (at least 130°F) for 5–10 minutes.
- Items that cannot be laundered may be dry-cleaned or sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- Vacuuming furniture and floors can remove hairs that might have viable nits attached.
 - The risk of getting infested by a louse that has fallen onto a rug/carpet or furniture is very low. 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.

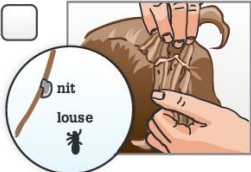
Preventing head lice from coming back

- Continue to check for 2–3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.
- Inspect household items that can get infested with lice and nits — towels, rugs, and bedding.
- Look carefully at the clothes your child has worn during the past 2 days for lice and their eggs.
- Reinforce the message to stop sharing anything that touches the head.
- Tell your child to stop head-to-head contact with other kids until the school is free of lice.
- All people in the same home, and other close 'head-to-head' contacts of the previous 4-6 weeks should be contacted. Tell them to look for lice and treat if they find any. All people with head lice in the same home should be treated at the same time. This stops lice being passed around again and again.


REFERENCES

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/index.html>


http://www.babycenter.com/0_head-lice-101-what-lice-look-like-how-they-behave-and-how-ki_10892.bc#articlesection1


1  Confirm presence of lice by looking closely at your child's scalp, especially behind the ears.


2  Check other kids and adults in your home and begin treatment of everyone affected ASAP.

3  Buy a metal lice comb and OTC lice treatment, or call a lice salon for an appointment.

4  Apply lice treatment to hair, following package directions exactly.

5  Comb out hair carefully (see "How to do a lice comb-out" for tips).

6  Wash or soak bedding, towels, hair care items in hot water, or dry in hot dryer.

7  Wash beloved stuffed animals, or put in a bag for two weeks (optional).

8  Vacuum fabric-covered items where child's head has rested (furniture, carpets, car seats).

9  Don't wash your pets (they can't carry lice) or clean your whole house (it doesn't help!).

10  Tell teachers, friends, and caregivers, so other children can be checked promptly.

11  Repeat comb-outs every 1 or 2 days for 10 days.

12  Repeat the lice treatment 9 days after first application.