



WASHINGTON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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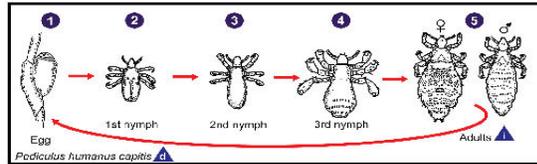
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WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HEAD LICE

What are Head Lice?

- Lice are tiny light brown wingless, six-legged bugs that live on the human scalp. They are about the size of the sesame seed. (See photos of life cycle of the head lice at right).
- Lice lay tiny oval grayish-white to brown colored eggs (nits), which the female louse glues to a strand of hair. Unlike dandruff, **eggs/nits can't be washed off or brushed away**. Eggs/nits need to be pulled off from the single strand of hair.
- The life span of an adult louse is 30-35 days. A female louse lays 3-5 eggs per day. Lice eggs hatch in about one week.



Actual size of the three lice forms compared to a penny (Photo credit: CDC)

How do you get lice?

- Lice do not hop, jump or fly. They crawl.
- Lice are spread from person-to-person by head-to-head contact or by sharing of brushes, combs, hats, scarfs, coats, and bedding.

Signs of Head Lice

- Itching happens when lice bite and suck blood from the scalp. This is a sign that head lice are present. Not everyone will feel itching.
- Lice and eggs/nits can be seen if one looks very closely. Live lice move very quickly. The eggs/nits are usually the first thing seen when lice are present.
- Bite marks are sometimes seen at the base of the neck and around the ears. Skin irritation and infection may occur from itching. Your child should see the doctor, if there are signs of skin infection.

Treatment for Head Lice

- **Use lice treatment as directed.** All lice-killing products are pesticides and must be used with caution. Regular shampooing will not kill head lice. **NOTE: Lice treatments can be harmful if not used correctly. Keep lice treatments out of the reach of children. Read and follow all directions carefully. Talk to your doctor if your child has a ragweed allergy, asthma, history of seizures, or is under the age of 2 years.**
- **All egg/nits** must be removed from the hair to stop the lice cycle. Eggs/nits must be removed by picking them off the hair strands with your fingertips or by cutting off the hair strands they are attached to. Egg/nit removal combs are available, but may not be effective in removing ALL nits. To prevent reinfestation, continue to check those persons who were found to have live lice or nits daily for 10-14 days - removing all nits.
- Many lice products require a second treatment. Follow bottle instructions for retreatment.
- Lice treatment may prevent a person from getting lice. Lice treatments kill live lice, but do not kill all the eggs/nits. Prophylactic treatment of bed mates and immediate members of the household may be recommended. Consult with your family physician.
- If alternative treatment methods are used, follow guidelines for safe use in Disease Fact Sheet: Pediculosis.

Important Steps to be done to eliminate Head Lice

- Keep your child home until treatment has been done. Know your school's policy regarding egg/nit removal and when he/she can return to school. Your child **should not** be out of school for longer than one day.
- Check **every member** of the household for lice and eggs/nits and treat only persons with live lice or eggs/nits on the same day. A bright light or natural sunlight is the best for finding eggs/nits on hair.
- All clothing, bedding, stuffed animals, or other items in contact with your child during the **last three days** should be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer. Dry clean all nonwashable clothing, bed covers and other material in contact with head and hair. If items cannot be washed, dry cleaned, or vacuumed, they should be placed in a plastic bag for **two weeks**.
- Thoroughly vacuum carpeting and furniture. Use vacuum cleaner attachments, such as the brush and crevice tool to vacuum furniture, car seats, pillows and mattresses, etc. Boil combs, brushes, curlers or wash them in hot soapy water or lice treatment. All hair elastic ties and bows need to be washed in hot soapy water. Make sure all items are cleaned before they are used by your child after treatment has been done.
- Report that your child has lice to his or her school or day care. Also tell your child's playmate's parents. Reporting lice helps protect all children including your own.
- Insecticidal sprays are not recommended and are strongly discouraged by the National Pediculosis Association and Center for Disease Control and Prevention. They may be harmful to family members and pets and are of questionable benefit.
- Your child will be allowed back in school according to your school's policy regarding egg/nit removal. You can have your child checked for eggs/nits at his or her school or day care, or at Public Health.
- NOTE: Egg/nit removal is the key to getting rid of head lice. Head lice treatments do not kill all the lice eggs. Parents are to remove eggs/nits. It is important to check your child's hair every day for at least the next 10 days and remove any eggs/nits. Egg/nit checks should become part of a daily routine. Follow directions on the lice treatment, and do not overtreat your child.

For more Information Contact:
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Website resources:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/default.htm>