



Pest Press



" I P M - I T ' S T H E R I G H T T H I N G T O D O . "

HEAD LICE

This time of the year is about the time we start seeing widespread infestations of head lice. The head louse infests 10-12 million people each year in the United States.

DON'T PANIC! IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE!

Many families with young children have at least one encounter with the head louse, *Pediculus humanus capitis*. Head lice can infest people of all ages, but children are prone to infestations because they play in close contact, share hats, headphones, combs and brushes, sleeping bags, stuffed animals, and clothing. In fact, the problem of head lice can be so rampant among preschool and school-aged children that often schools must work in conjunction with many families to control an infestation.

Head lice Facts:

Lice eggs are called nits. Nits are oval, white to dark cylinders that are about 1/16 of an inch long. They are glued to hairs near the scalp. Older nits are found far from the scalp due to hair growth. The females' favorite place to glue the eggs is near the ears and back of the head. In normal conditions, the eggs will hatch in 7-10 days. You cannot "catch" nits; the eggs must be laid on the hair by live head lice.

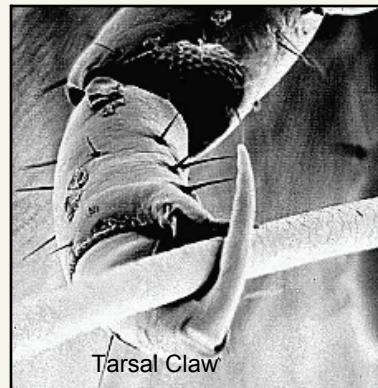
Nits hatch into nymphs, immature forms which look like small adults. Both nymphs and adults have piercing-sucking mouthparts to pierce the skin for a blood meal. The young lice must feed within 24 hours after hatching or they will not survive.

Newly hatched lice molt three times before becoming mature adults. This process usually takes 10-12 days.

Adult head lice are about 1/8 of an inch in length (about the size of a sesame seed) and



range in color from white to brown to dark gray. They do not have wings or powerful jumping legs, so they move about by clinging on hairs with specially adapted claw-like legs. Adult head lice are swift-moving and tend to avoid light. Females may live up to 40 days, laying 6-7 nits a day, up to 50 to 100 nits during their lifetime.



People previously unexposed to lice experience little irritation from their first bite. After additional bites, however, individuals may become sensitized and experience an allergic reaction; this includes reddening of the skin, itching, and overall inflammation. The reaction of individuals to louse bites can

vary considerably.

Head lice **do not** prefer dirty hair. They do prefer to live on the hair of the human head, and are unable to survive away from a human host for more than about 24 hours (thus, they cannot live in rugs, carpets, or school buses). It is important to note that lice are **not** found on animals or household pets, and are not transmitted from pets to humans.

Prevention:

Periodic inspections (monitoring) will aid in early detection of any individual lice which are more easily controlled than advanced infestations. Be aware of medical and privacy issues. Consult with your school nurse. Children should be encouraged **NOT** to share combs, hats, and other personal belongings. To check for head lice begin with good lighting. Remove tangles with a comb or hairbrush. Divide the hair in sections and fasten the hair

that is not being worked on. Use a hand lens or a magnifying glass to help detect nits and head lice. For nits, look near the scalp. Eggs more than one-half of one inch away from the scalp are nearly always hatched and do not – by themselves – indicate an active infestation or need for treatment. If, however, either adults or nits are found, this is a call to action. Also, check everyone in the household, including adults.

Controlling Nits and Adult Lice

Once an infestation is detected, wash all clothing in hot soapy water. Wash pillowcases, sheets, blankets and other bedding and place them in the clothes dryer on high heat to kill lice and eggs. Seal any items that cannot be washed, such as toys, in plastic bags for 7-10 days to kill adult lice.

Prescription and nonprescription drugs are available to control lice. Over-the-counter creams, lotions, or shampoos containing permethrin or pyrethrins as active ingredients should be effective. Shampoos are preferred.

Treatment with Shampoos (CDC Recommendations):

1. **Apply lice medicine according to instructions in the box or printed on the label.** If the infested person's hair is longer than shoulder length, it may require the use of a second bottle. Also, pay special attention to the instructions on how long to leave the medication on the hair before washing it out.

WARNING:

Do not use a combination shampoo/conditioner or conditioner before using lice medicine. Do not re-wash the hair for 1-2 days after the lice medicine is removed. **FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS!!**

2. If a few live lice are still found 8-12 hours after treatment, but are moving more slowly than before, do not retreat. The medicine may take longer to kill all the lice. Comb dead and any remaining live lice out of the hair using a fine-toothed nit comb.
3. If, after 8-12 hours of treatment, no dead lice are found and lice seem as active as before, the medicine may not be working. Do not retreat until speaking with your health care provider; a different lice medicine may be necessary. If another medicine is recommended, be sure to **follow the treatment and instructions carefully.**
4. Nit combs, often found in lice medicine packages, should be used to comb nits and lice from the hair.
5. 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 self-reinfestation. Continue to check for 2-3 weeks to be sure all lice and nits are gone.

Retreatment is generally recommended on day 9 in order to kill any surviving hatched lice before they produce new eggs. **Be sure to read the label** to know exactly when and how to use the product safely and correctly.

To find out about **YOUR** school's policy and procedures for children discovered with lice, check with your school's nurse's office.

Information taken from:

Pollack, Richard J. August 2000. Harvard School of Public Health.

Scherer, C. W., P. G. Koehler and F. M. Oi. August 1997. Head Lice. University of Florida: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

The National Pediculosis Association,® Inc.: <http://www.headlice.org/>.

CDC Head Lice Treatment Information: <http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/treatment.html>

J. Snyder, D. Gouge, C. Olson, University of Arizona, Head Lice Management: <http://ag.arizona.edu/urbanipm/buglist/headlice.pdf>

A. Brammer, August 2005. Pest Press News. Back-to-school means homework and head lice. http://schoolipm.tamu.edu/files/2010/11/Newsletter_19.pdf

Treating objects with lice sprays is not recommended because lice cannot live off the host longer than a couple of days. Use of the products is considered ineffective and unnecessary. It is USELESS to spray for head lice in your classroom or at home – so please don't ask your pest control technician to do so.



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