

Head Lice

This is a magnified picture of head lice on a fine-tooth comb which shows that these bugs are very tiny.



Head Lice Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of head lice include:

- Itchy scalp
- Scratching
- Some people scratch so much that the scalp
 - sometimes the back of the neck becomes red and irritated
- Crawling sensation
 - People often feel something crawling on the hair or scalp
- Seeing bugs
 - These look like light-brown sesame seeds crawling on the:
 - hair
 - skin
 - clothing
- Finding lice eggs (nits)
 - - the eggs are yellow,
 - brown, or tan
 - the size of a pinhead
 - seem glued to the hair
 - if the eggs have hatched, you will see clear shells.
- Swollen lymph nodes (many people call “glands”) in the neck.
- Pink eye- this is a common eye infection.

Facts about Head Lice

Facts about Head Lice:

- Having head lice does not mean you are dirty
- Lice do not care whether hair is squeaky-clean or dirty
- Lice feed off of human blood to survive
- Millions of people get head lice each year
- Head-lice infestations are especially common in schools
- Head lice do not spread disease
- Head lice can make your scalp extremely itchy
- Treatment usually gets rid of head lice
- Head lice actually crawl everywhere.
- People get head lice when they have head-to-head contact with someone who has head lice
 - Head-to-head contact lets the lice crawl from one head to another head
 - They crawl on to objects that come into contact with human hair such as hats and towels
 - Head lice crawl onto objects that have touched the human head
- You can get head lice by sharing objects infested with lice such as:
 - hats
 - scarves
 - coats
 - hair accessories
 - brushes
 - combs
 - towels
- You can also get head lice by resting your head on a:
 - bed
 - pillow
 - couch
 - chair
 - rug that someone with head lice used
- They cannot fly or jump, but they are tiny and move quickly

Checking for Head Lice at Home

Follow these steps:

- Find a bright light or flash light
- Find a fine-tooth comb or lice comb
- Wet the hair of the child
 - This also prevents the lice from scurrying away.
- Sit the affected child or adult under a bright light.
- Separate hair into sections
 - Beginning at the scalp,
 - Slowly comb outward through the hair section by section.
As you comb through the hair, look closely at the hair behind the ears and around the nape of the neck.

What to look for:

- Head-lice eggs:
 - Before the eggs hatch, you will see color as shown here on the left.
 - After the eggs hatch, you see a clear shell as seen on the right.
 - look for adult lice and their eggs (called nits)
 - You're more likely to see nits than adults because nits are firmly attached to the hair and do not move.



If the person has adult lice or nits, you will see the following:

- Adult lice:
 - light-brown objects that resemble sesame seeds, often moving quickly.
 - You can find these on the scalp or the hair.
- Eggs:
 - yellow, brown, or tan objects that look like tiny seeds
 - cemented to individual hairs close to the scalp.
 - If an egg has hatched, the seed-like object will be clear.

When looking closely at the scalp and hair, it is important to know:

- that kids and adults can have all kinds of stuff in their hair.
- You may see sand, dirt, lint, or dandruff.
- All of these comb out easily.
- Nits seem cemented to the hair and very difficult to remove.

Treating head lice at home

There are several products that you can buy at your local drug or grocery store to get rid of head lice and their nits. These are available without a prescription.

Doctors and Dermatologists offer the following tips for using these products:

- First treatment
- Carefully read and follow the directions.
- Using a lice shampoo usually involves:
 - Lathering a **regular shampoo** into the hair
 - Leaving the **regular shampoo** on for a few minutes
 - Rinse and **do not use Conditioner and towel dry**
- Follow the directions for the lice removal product and:
 - Apply product to the wet head of infested person
 - Make sure person is fully dressed so product doesn't splash onto skin
 - Leave on the required amount of time
 - Then rinse product out of hair with running water
- These products are not meant for use while taking a shower or bath.
 - You want to limit the amount of skin that the product touches.
- Use only one product.
 - Using two products meant to treat head lice can be harmful.
 - If two different products are necessary, your dermatologist can tell you which ones can be combined.
- Use the amount stated on the product.
 - Using more can be harmful.
- Use the lice comb that comes with the shampoo.
 - The teeth on a lice comb are closer together than the teeth on a regular comb.
 - Placing the teeth closer together makes it easier to remove the lice and their nits.
- Look at the hair 8 to 12 hours after treatment.
 - If the lice seem as active as they were before the treatment, the medicine may not be working.

- Do not treat again.
 - Talk with your doctor or dermatologist.
 - A different lice medicine may be necessary.

The next day, if the medicine seems to be working, you'll want to:

- Wait 2 days to wash your hair.
 - This lets the medicated product continue to work.
- Continue to comb through the hair with the lice comb once a day.
 - Doing this for 2 to 3 weeks helps to ensure that you get rid of the lice.

7 to 9 days after the first treatment:

- Retreat as recommended on the package.
 - Retreatment is generally recommended with all products you can buy without a prescription.
 - Retreatment is usually done 7 to 9 days after the first treatment.
 - The lice shampoos often are more successful at killing the adult lice than the nits, so retreatment helps to kill any surviving lice that hatched after the first treatment.
 - No approved treatment for head lice can kill all the eggs during the first treatment.
- After applying the second treatment
 - comb through the hair with the lice comb.
 - Wait 2 days to wash the hair.
 - Continue to comb through the hair with the lice comb once a day.
 - Do this for 2 weeks, checking for lice and nits.

How to improve at-home treatment for head lice:

- Use a lice comb:
 - Using a lice comb can improve the effectiveness of treatment.
 - It is important to use a lice comb when school policy requires that a child be “nit free” before returning to school.
- Another treatment option is to shave the scalp bald.
- Treat family and friends:
 - It is very common for close family and friends to get head lice.
- Dermatologists recommend that you check everyone for head lice.
 - You do not want to treat anyone who does not have head lice; however,
 - you should check everyone every day for 10 to 15 days.

When to see a dermatologist about head lice

If the at-home treatment does not work or this seems more than you can handle, you should see a dermatologist for treatment.

Your dermatologist may recommend a product that you can buy without a prescription or a prescription medicine.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the following prescription medicines to treat head lice:

- Benzyl alcohol lotion:
 - Approved to treat head lice in people 6 months of age and older,
 - this medicine is applied to dry hair.
 - When using this treatment, you want to saturate the scalp and hair.
 - After 10 minutes, it's time to thoroughly rinse off the medicine.
 - benzyl alcohol kills the lice but not their eggs
 - repeat the treatment in 7 days.
 - comb the hair for nits.
- Ivermectin (eye-ver-mec-tin) lotion:
 - Approved to treat head lice in people 6 months of age and older
 - Ivermectin treats most head lice with just one use
 - without the need to comb nits out of the hair.
 - Side effects include itchy skin,
 - eye irritation (if the medicine gets in an eye),
 - a burning sensation on the skin.
 - All are temporary.
- Malathion (mal-uh-THIGH-on) lotion:
 - Approved to treat people ages 6 years of age and older,
 - malathion works by paralyzing and killing the lice and their eggs.
 - This is very potent medicine, so be sure that you:
 - Keep the medicine away from everyone's eyes.
 - If the medicine gets in someone's eyes, flush the eyes right away with lots of water for several minutes.
 - Most people need to apply this medicine only once.
 - Nit combing is not necessary.
 - You will need to check the scalp 7 days after treatment.
 - If crawling lice are seen be sure to tell your dermatologist.
 - You may need to repeat the treatment
 - Do NOT smoke while using this medicine.

- If anyone in the room smokes while this medicine is being used, a fire can start.
- Leave cigarettes, cigars, and other things that you can smoke in another room.
- Keep the medicine away from flames.
- You want to use malathion in a room without a stove or fireplace.
- Because malathion can cause a fire, even unlit lighters and camp stoves should **NOT** be in the room where you'll use malathion.
- If you're using malathion outdoors, be sure a camp fire is **NOT** burning.
- Keep all electrical appliances that produce heat turned off.
- Using this medicine while a blow dryer, iron, curling iron, or space heater is running nearby can start a fire.
- When used as directed, malathion is safe and effective.
- It can irritate the skin a bit as it works.
- May cause dry hair or their skin can burn or sting.
- Side effects are temporary.
- Spinosad suspension:
 - This medicine is approved to treat head lice in people 6 months of age and older.
 - It has been found to be safe and effective when used as directed.
 - Most people need to apply this medicine only once.
 - Nit combing is not necessary.
 - check the scalp 7 days after treatment.
 - If crawling lice are seen be sure to tell your dermatologist. You may need to repeat the treatment.
- Lindane shampoo:
 - This medicine has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat head lice.
 - Approved to treat head lice, this treatment is prescribed when other treatments do not work.
 - It is essential to use lindane shampoo only as directed.
 - It can be toxic when misused.

Treating your home for head lice



You Must Also Treat Your Home for Head Lice

Whether you treat at home or see a dermatologist, you must also treat your home. To avoid another infestation, you should clean the following items:

- Brushes and combs
 - Soak combs and brushes that a person with head lice used.
 - Soak these in hot water, 130 degrees Fahrenheit or hotter, for 10 minutes.
- Sheets, pillowcases, clothes, blankets, and towels
 - Place all items that touched the person's head during the past 2 days in a washing machine and wash in hot water.
 - Dry all machine-washed items in a hot dryer, using the hottest setting.
 - Dry for at least 10 minutes.
- Stuffed animals and pillows
 - Place items that cannot be machine washed in a hot dryer and run the dryer on the hottest setting for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Other personal items
 - Hair accessories, helmets, headphones, and other personal items can become infested with head lice. If a person with head lice has touched any of these items during the past 2 days, you can kill the lice on these objects by:
 - Sealing the objects in plastic bags.

- Placing the plastic bags in the freezer overnight or keeping the bags sealed for 2 weeks.
- Two weeks is the amount of time needed for adult lice and newly hatched lice to die when hot water, dryer heat, and freezing are impractical.
- Furniture, carpets, and floors
 - Vacuum these thoroughly to pick up any hairs the person with head lice has shed.
 - Everyone normally loses about 50 to 100 hairs a day.

Outcome

Two treatments (spaced 7 to 9 days apart) often get rid of head lice.

- If your child or someone else in your family still has head lice after a few weeks, it means that the treatments did not work or the person got lice again.
- Make an appointment to see a dermatologist for help getting rid of the head lice. With proper treatment, it is possible to get rid of head lice.

Frequently Asked Questions The National Pediculosis Association (NPA) answers your most common questions

What product should I use to treat my child?

- There are no over-the-counter or prescription treatments to kill lice that are totally safe and scientifically proven to be 100% effective against head lice and nits.
- These treatments are potentially harmful pesticides and reliance on them promotes repeated use and contributes to ongoing infestations, outbreaks and resistant strains of head lice.
- Various "natural" remedies are vigorously marketed on the Internet but we have found **no scientific basis** for their claims of efficacy and human safety.
- Manual removal of the live lice and nits is the safe alternative and a necessary component of any head lice treatment regimen.
- The NPA recommends the **LiceMeister® Comb** to enable families to screen often, detect head lice early and thoroughly remove lice and nits.

Are lice shampoos potentially hazardous?

- Although the FDA requires testing for safety before they give their approval to any product, individuals have unique vulnerabilities that must be considered before any treatment.
- The NPA warns against the use of any chemicals designed to kill or destroy head lice in any individuals who have a pre-existing illness.
- This would include, but not be limited to, those with:
 - asthma
 - epilepsy
 - brain tumors
 - cancer
 - AIDS
 - those on medication
 - those previously treated for head lice
 - pregnant
 - nursing mothers

What chemicals are used in head lice treatments?

- Head lice pesticide products contain both "active" and "inert" ingredients.
- An active ingredient is one that prevents, destroys or repels a pest.
- An inert ingredient is any ingredient in the product that is not intended to affect a target pest. For example:
 - isopropyl alcohol may be an active ingredient in some products, however, in other products, it is used as a solvent and considered an inert ingredient.
 - Solvents are materials in which pesticides are dissolved or absorbed.
 - Exposure to such inerts can result in significant toxic effects exceed the toxicity of the active pesticide ingredients.
 - Potential risks of active ingredients are accepted, but inert ingredients cannot be overlooked.
 - Many consumers are misled by the term "inert", believing it to mean harmless.
 - It should never be assumed that inert ingredients are non-toxic.
 - The concern over inert ingredients and solvents apply to all treatment products.

What about alternative and natural products?

- Non-toxic remedies are obviously a preferred choice over pesticides whenever possible.
- Not everything touted as "natural" is across-the-board safe.

- Many "alternatives" have already failed against readily available Lice treatments from the local drug stores.
- No matter which remedy you are attempting - wrapping the hair in plastic or a shower cap and putting the children to bed is a bad idea. It is also a source of potential harm to use a wrap with any of the lice treatments (whether in bed or not) as it may alter its chemistry and absorption rates.
- Effective screening and combing is the ultimate complement to whatever course of action an individual selects.
- It is impossible to obtain independent scientific data as to the effectiveness and safety on many of the different ideas being circulated about "natural" remedies.
- Ultimately, it will always be the "parent power" behind the effort that makes the difference.

How do you treat a home or school for lice?

- Homes or schools don't get head lice - people do.
- Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive.
- Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice and or nits from:
 - upholstered furniture,
 - rugs,
 - stuffed animals or
 - car seats - wherever someone with head lice may have rested their head.
- Pesticidal sprays are unwarranted and may pose personal and environmental hazards.
- Vacuum and save your time and energy for what benefits you the most - thorough nit removal.
- Evidence appears to be against transmission from inanimate objects being significant
- Inanimate objects that play an epidemiologically important role in head lice dispersal is not supported by evidence.
- We conclude that the control of head lice should focus on the head, not on the environment

Do I have to treat everyone in the house?

- Use a nit-removal comb to check everyone.
- Even if lice are found on an individual, careful consideration should be given before deciding to use a lice killing treatment because each person has unique health vulnerabilities.

- Lice treatment products are potentially hazardous to health and should not be used "just in case" a child or family member has lice or in an effort to prevent them.

Do I need to spray my furniture and bedding?

- Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive.
- They are not environmental pests so pesticidal sprays for furniture and bedding are unnecessary and a serious risk to health.
- Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from:
 - upholstered furniture
 - rugs
 - stuffed animals
 - cars

Do I have to bag stuffed animals and other items?

- Experts used to suggest bagging items such as stuffed animals for a number of weeks to help bring infestations under control.
- Since lice cannot survive without human blood, this is unnecessary.
- Vacuuming is a sufficient safeguard for any questionable areas or items that may be in contact with those who are infested.
- You can also put bed linens, stuffed animals and other items in a dryer for 30 minutes.
- Save your physical and emotional energies for screening and thorough lice and nit removal.

How are head lice spread?

- Head lice can be spread whenever there is direct contact of the head or hair with an infested individual.
- Lice can also be spread through the sharing of personal articles like:
 - hats
 - towels
 - brushes
 - helmets
 - hair ties
 - pillow
 - headrest
 - Head lice do not jump or fly and generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host.

Do head lice jump?

- Head lice do not jump or fly and generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host.
- Head lice do not have hind legs to hop or jump.
- They also do not have wings and cannot fly.

Can you catch head lice from cars, pillows or furniture?

- If a louse comes off the head and is left behind (i.e., on a pillow or head rest), it may be possible for the louse to infest another individual who places their head in that area.
- Vacuuming is recommended for any areas or items that may be in contact with those who are infested.

Can you catch head lice in a pool, pond or lake?

- Swimming with someone who has lice carries no greater risk of transmission than any other activity.
- When lice are in water, they go into a state of suspended animation but remain firmly locked onto the hair - literally hanging on for dear life.
- This is how they survive shampooing, rain, seawater and swimming pools.
- Risk of transmission will occur with the sharing of :
 - towels
 - piling clothing
 - piling towels
 - storing personal items in close proximity
 - direct head to head contact

Can you catch head lice from headphones or helmets?

- The extent to which head lice are transmitted to others via headphones or helmets is unknown.
- Ideally, risk of transmission can be eliminated by making sure children have and use their own equipment.
- If this is not possible, you can clean the items between children by wiping them with a damp paper towel.
- An additional measure would be to encourage each child to wear a baseball cap to help shield the hair from contact with the item.
- Helmets and headphones should never be sprayed.
- Most importantly - and best for the entire community - all parents should screen their children regularly and before sending them into the group setting where helmets or headphones will be shared.

How can I tell if the nits are dead or alive?

- Children, like adults, do not want nits in their hair - dead or alive.
- The time it would take to make the distinction is time far better spent removing ALL the nits.
- Finding 10 dead nits guarantees nothing for the 11th.

How long can nits and lice survive off of a head?

- Once laid, it takes 7-10 days for a nit to hatch.
- Nits off the head may not even hatch at all as they are laid close to scalp because they need human warmth to incubate.
- A nit hatching off of a head results in tiny nymph head louse which, without an accessible/nearby human, is doomed because it requires an immediate blood meal.
- Adult head lice off of their human hosts will generally not survive for more than 24 hours

Where do head lice come from?

- Head lice do not come out of the air or from the ground.
- They are human parasites and have probably been here since the beginning of time.
- Desiccated (dried up) head lice and their eggs (nits) have been found on the hair and scalps of Egyptian mummies.

Do head lice carry or transmit any disease?

- While many have thought head lice to be only a nuisance, recent scientific study refutes this notion.
- DNA technology shows head lice to be the same species as the notorious body louse which has long been associated with diseases such as typhus and relapsing fever.
- The potential for disease transmission via the head louse should not be underestimated.

How does one rule out head lice?

- The LiceMeister® comb is an objective medical device for screening to confirm or rule out head lice.

How can you verify successful treatment?

- First, one must define treatment.
- Someone can be treated and still be infested.

- The ultimate determination that someone is no longer infested can only be accomplished with a thorough manual screening with a quality lice and nit removal comb to confirm the complete absence of lice and nits.
- Visual screening can be helpful but it is not definitive.
- The LiceMeister® comb is a medical device designed for screening as well as the removal of lice and nits.
- Such combing offers peace of mind and assurances that you are lice and nit free.

What is the life cycle of the head louse?

- Head lice can survive on a human host for approximately 30 days.
- They generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host.
- A female louse lays 3-5 eggs a day.
- The eggs hatch in 7-10 days and it takes another 7-10 day for the louse to mature and lay their own eggs.

Do pets get head lice?

- Head lice cannot be "caught" from pets and cannot survive on pets.
- They are human parasites and require human blood for survival.

Should fluorescent lights be used for lice screenings?

- Some health professionals recommend the use of fluorescent lighting in screening, but others have reported that it confuses the diagnosis because the light illuminates lint, hair debris and dry skin as well as the nits.
- Nits are visible to the naked eye in natural light.
- If you are unsure whether you are seeing a nit, use a magnifying glass to take a closer look.
- For even better results, use the LiceMeister comb to screen through the hair - it will collect even what you cannot see.
- Too often, nits are confused with hair debris and children are treated unnecessarily.
- Be sure you know the difference.
- The NPA's Critter Card has actual images on a handy reference card with instructions to help you distinguish lice and nits from hair debris.

What is the proper procedure for doing head checks?

- While rubber gloves may protect the nurse, they will not prevent the communication of infectious dermatological conditions such as impetigo between the students being examined unless the gloves are changed for each exam.

- Such expenditure in money and time would be impractical for the majority of nurses, who screen hundreds of students at a time and there are more realistic measures available.
- NPA promotes the use of disposable wooden screening sticks for each child when doing group screenings.
 - The sticks, which separate hair strands easily, provide a hygienic approach for nurse and child alike.
 - When there is any question or doubt as to whether a child is infested, we recommend a visit to the nurse's station for a more thorough examination aided by a nit comb.
 - We also recommend this combing for a child who is returning to the classroom after having had his or her infestation properly managed with manual removal of lice and nits.
 - While visual examinations can detect an infestation, it is what one is unable to see that too often results in chronic infestations where families assume they are "reinfested" but in reality have "stayed infested" because the nits remained to continue the cycle.

Are African Americans susceptible to lice infestations?

- African Americans are reported to have a much lower incidence of head lice than:
 - Caucasians,
 - Hispanics or
 - Asian Americans.
- Pediatric Dermatology cites various studies that suggest the incidence among African American schoolchildren is less than half of one percent, while the incidence among their non-black schoolmates is usually more than 10 percent.
- Even though African Americans may be less susceptible to infestations, this should not be grounds for complacency.
- African Americans can, and do, get head lice.

What makes the LiceMeister comb better than others?

- Over a decade of proven market quality
- Meets parent demand for safe, effective, non-chemical alternative to pesticide treatments
- The safest choice for resistant lice
- Precision design, highly polished stainless teeth, no sharp edges like other combs
- Large easy to grip hygienically sealed handle that won't rust, collect debris or cut the hair
- Packaging includes patented lice comb cleaner

- With educational LiceMeister Critter Card to help parents distinguish lice and nits and confusing hair debris
- Child health responsible treatment for head lice



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Fee includes: Check and treat the family, follow up visits, no extra charge for long or thick hair,

Program: technician comes to you to your home equipped with the expertise and supplies needed to eradicate your family's head lice. 100% Guarantee

Website:

<http://www.licedoctors.com/wisconsin/madison-lice-treatmentservice.html>