

What are lice?

Head lice are human parasites that live entirely on the human head. They feed on blood and cannot survive off the head for more than 24 to 48 hours without a blood meal. They do not hop, jump or fly.

What are the signs of head lice?

Signs include: frequent scratching or feeling like there's something moving in the hair.

How do I check for lice?

Head lice are very small and move very quickly. It's easier to confirm a head lice infestation by finding their eggs (nits). Get a good light and magnifying glass. Start by parting the hair and looking closely at the root. Hot spots are the nape of the neck, the crown of the head and behind the ears. Look for tiny, oval shaped nits cemented to one side of the hair shaft. Nits stick like glue and are *very* hard to remove.

Who should we notify?

You will need to contact your child's school, sports teams or anyone else who may have been in close contact with your child over the past few weeks. This is a very important step, and when caught early prevents community-wide outbreaks.

What can I do now to prevent re-infestations?

Early detection is the best prevention! Screen all family members once a week.

Do pets get head lice?

No, lice are human parasites which need human blood to survive.

**Why is manual removal so important?**

Nits will continue to hatch and reproduce until you get them out. This is your most important step and this is also the most time-consuming. You can expect to spend about two hours per head every two to three days over the next two weeks. Leaving just one louse can cause complete re-infestation.

What should I clean?

Homes don't get head lice—people do! There is no evidence that a major cleaning is necessary. Since most head lice can only live up to 48 hours off the head, concentrate on areas where the infected person has been in the last two days. Blankets, toys, sheets, pillowcases, clothes, towels etc. should be washed in very hot water or place in a hot dryer for 30 minutes. Vacuum furniture and car seats. "Dryclean only" articles or items that cannot be vacuumed, washed or dried can simply be set aside for 48 hours.



What to Look For:

Nits (lice eggs): Nits vary in color from clear to brownish-gray and are about 1/2 the size of a sesame seed. They are usually found close to the scalp. Dandruff or hair casts are commonly mistaken for nits but they are irregularly shaped and easily dislodged. Nits are always the same shape and are glued firmly to one side of the hair shaft. They are commonly found around the ears and at the nape of the neck.

Nymphs: Nymphs are immature head lice. Nymphs are about the size of a pinhead and look like an adult louse. They must feed on blood to survive and molt 3 times in a week before becoming an adult.

Head Lice: Head Lice vary in color from translucent to black and are about the size of a sesame seed. Lice do not jump or fly. They have claws on their six legs, which allow them to move quickly through hair. Female lice can lay up to 8 nits a day and are larger than males.

Try these sites for more information and great pictures:

<http://www.headlice.org/faq/lousology.htm>

How do I get rid of them?

The safest and easiest way to get rid of head lice is by using the [Wet-Combing Method](#). This method breaks up the life cycle by manually removing all live lice and nits before they can reproduce.

Common lice treatment products contain either [Lindane](#), [Permethrin](#) or [Malathion](#). Each product gives specific instructions on how to use these chemicals. If you choose to use these products, please follow the manufacturer's instructions *carefully*.

You **can** safely remove head lice without harsh chemicals simply by manually combing out all lice and nits.










Pesticide-based products are not 100% effective....even though the packaging may make you think otherwise. They *only* kill the live lice and do nothing to the nits. When the nits hatch re-application is often necessary. With each application you are exposing your children to more and more potentially harmful pesticides.

No matter which method you choose, manual removal is crucial!



Many products claim that spraying your environment with enzymes and other remedies will rid you of head lice. Don't waste your time or money on these sprays. Instead, focus your energy on manual removal. **Homes don't get head lice - people do!**

Lifecycle of the Head Louse

First day		Egg (nit) is laid on hair shaft
6-7 days		Louse hatches
8-9 days		1st molt 2 days after hatching
10-12 days		2nd molt 5 days after hatching
13-15 days		3rd molt 10 days after hatching
15-17 days		Adult lice begin to reproduce
17-19 days		Female lays first nit 1-2 days after mating
19-32 days		Female lays 3-8 nits per day for 16 days
32-35 days		Having laid up to 144 nits, lice die.

Wet Combing Method

Removal of all lice and nits is the most important part of the treatment process and one that many people ignore. Leaving just one louse can cause a complete re-infestation within days.

You will need a good lice comb, a magnifying glass, white hair conditioner, a detangling comb, a bowl of hot water and plenty of tissues.

- Find a location with good lighting.
- As this process can take several hours, make sure you are comfortable and have something to occupy the person being treated.
- If using a magnifying visor, adjust your visor to your head size.
- Apply enough conditioner on dry hair to thoroughly cover the entire scalp and hair.
- Use a detangling comb to remove knots.
- Separate the hair into manageable sections.
- Use the lice removal comb to comb through the hair to remove live lice and nits. Place the teeth of the lice comb as close to the root as possible.
- Pull the lice removal comb through the full length of the hair, from the root to the tip.
- Rinse and wipe the comb after every pass.
- Concentrate on the areas near the scalp, behind the ears and the nape of the neck.
- After thorough combing and inspection, wash out the conditioner.
- Dry hair as usual.
- Wash all towels in hot water. Soak your tools in hot, soapy water
- Follow this procedure every 3 days for two weeks.

There is no known product that has been proven to prevent head lice. Anyone can get head lice. It has nothing to do with social status or cleanliness. It's simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

To reduce your risk, encourage all family members to:

- Wear their hair up at school or work.
- Don't share hats, helmets, combs or brushes.
- Use your own sleeping bag and pillow at sleep-overs.

All family members should be screened weekly. This allows you to catch the infestation at the earliest stages, making removal easier.