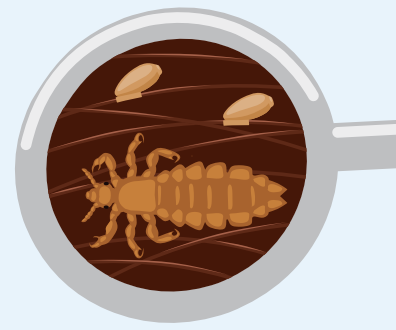


# HEAD LICE TREATMENT AND PREVENTION



## What are head lice?

Head lice (or *Pediculus humanus capitis*) are small, wingless parasitic insects about the size of a sesame seed that feed on blood on the human scalp. Head lice are very quick and use a hook-like claw to stay attached to the hair.

## What are nits?

Nits are lice eggs laid by adult female lice. They are white oval sacs about the size of a pin head. The life cycle of head lice is approximately 30 days during which time each female louse can lay up to 7-10 nits a day.

## Who gets head lice?

ANYONE can get head lice! It is most common in pre-school and elementary school-aged children (ages 3-12) and females. Kids are much more likely to get lice from family members and playmates than from classmates at school.

## How do they spread?

DIRECT contact with an infested person.

INDIRECT contact with personal belongings of an infested person such as brushes, combs, clothing, bedding, upholstered furniture and car interiors.



## Signs & Symptoms

**ITCHING AND SCRATCHING** usually on the back of the scalp and neck and behind the ears.

**SORES ON THE HEAD** caused by scratching.

**VISIBLE** lice or nits.

**REMEMBER: NITS STICK TO THE HAIR.**

Some children may have no symptoms. Don't confuse dirt or dandruff with nits.

## What to do if someone in your family has lice

- ALL Family members living with an infested person should be examined for the presence of head lice.
- Treat ANY family member with a head lice infestation.

## How to treat for lice

- USE AN FDA APPROVED, over-the-counter anti-pediculosis product. Prescription products are also available.
- READ THE INSTRUCTIONS before using any product and follow ALL instructions.
- COMB HAIR with a fine-tooth nit comb to remove lice and nits.
- DISINFECT all combs and brushes before using again by submerging them in hot water (at least 130° F) for 5–10 minutes or soak in anti-pediculosis shampoo for 1 hour.
- CHECK YOUR CHILD'S HAIR DAILY. Manually remove nits for 2 weeks following the initial treatment.
- RETREAT your child according to instructions on the box or label.
- CONTINUE to check your child's head every 2–3 days for at least 2–3 weeks.

**CAUTION:** Children under two years of age or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not use an anti-pediculosis product.

Persons with chronic illness or the elderly should consult their healthcare provider.

## Prevention Information

### Should all family members be treated?

ALL family members residing with an infested person should be examined for the presence of head lice.

Treat ANY family member with a head lice infestation.

### Does the household environment need to be treated?

- Routine cleaning of the child's environment, including washing recently used clothing, bedding and towels in hot water is recommended.
- Items that can not be washed should be sealed in plastic bags for 2 weeks.
- Vacuum carpeting, upholstery and car seats.

**REMEMBER:** Remember: Head lice can survive off a human host for up to 48 hours and nits will hatch within 7–10 days.

### What if I don't get rid of head lice after treatment?

Consult your healthcare provider.

### How can the spread of head lice be stopped?

The key to successful eradication of a head lice infestation is to break their life cycle through proper treatment.

### Will I ever get rid of head lice?

YES, it will end, but it takes time. Don't get discouraged! The main reasons for continued infestations are:

- Did not follow directions on the product.
- Did not remove all lice or nits.
- Did not treat the environment thoroughly.

**REMEMBER:** Each person with head lice needs a complete treatment. Do not split a single box of shampoo or container of rinse treatment between those that are infested.



### Who should I notify if my child has head lice?

- Pediatrician
- School Health Room
- Playmates and close friends outside of school

### There is NO proof that the following treatments work:

- Vinegar Compounds that claim to dissolve the glue on the nits "to ease their removal"
- Mayonnaise
- Olive Oil
- Tea Tree Oil
- Lotions that claim to "suffocate" lice
- Petroleum jelly
- Other household chemicals, including: kerosene, gasoline, paint thinners and turpentine