



Parent Helps with Head Lice Management

Overview

Head lice are a common community occurrence. An estimated 6 to 12 million infestations occur each year in the United States, most commonly among children ages 3 to 11 years old. Head lice is often spotted in school, and usually acquired through direct head-to-head contact elsewhere, such as at sleepovers or camp. Head lice are not dangerous, and they do not transmit disease. Contrary to popular belief head lice often infest people with good hygiene and grooming habits. It's important to know some basics, including how to recognize symptoms and what to do if faced with an infestation.

Symptoms of Head Lice

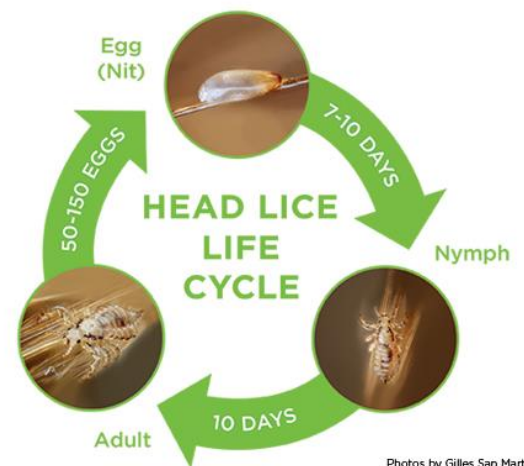
- Itching of the scalp is the main symptom.
- You may notice tiny gray bugs called lice.
- Lice lay many white eggs (nits) in the hair.
- The eggs are easier to see than the lice. Nits (eggs) are tiny white specks attached to hairs. Unlike dandruff or sand, nits can't be shaken off the hair shafts.
- A scalp rash may be present. The back of the neck is the favorite area.
- Lice are 1/16-inch (2 mm) long gray-colored bugs. They move quickly and are difficult to see. They are the size of a sesame seed.
- The lice feed on blood from the scalp. While the bug is sucking blood, some of its secretions get mixed in. Any scalp rash or bumps is the body's reaction to the bug's saliva.

Lifespan of Lice

- The nits (eggs) hatch into lice in about 1 week.
- Nits (eggs) that are over ½ inch (1 cm) from the scalp are empty egg cases. They are very white in color.
- Off the scalp, nits (eggs) can't survive over 2 weeks.
- Nymph lice are baby lice, they are small and grow to adult size in 1-3 weeks.
- Adult lice survive 3 weeks on the scalp or 24 hours off the scalp.

Transmission of Head Lice: Live Lice

- Only live lice can give lice to another child.
- Nits (lice eggs) cannot pass on lice. Nits are attached to the child's hair.
- Almost all spread of lice is from direct hair-to-hair contact. Lice cannot jump or fly to another person's hair.
- Most often, the spread of lice to others occurs at home, not school. Sleepovers and bed-sharing are a major source of spread.



Photos by Gilles San Martin

Care Advice for Head Lice

1 What You Should Know About Head Lice:

- Head lice can be treated at home.
- With careful treatment, all lice and nits (lice eggs) are usually killed.
- There are no lasting problems from having head lice.
- They do not carry any diseases.
- They do not make your child feel sick.

2 Anti-Lice Shampoo:

- Purchase anti-lice crème rinse (such as Nix) over the counter and follow package directions carefully.
- First, wash the hair with a regular shampoo. Then, towel dry it before using the anti-lice crème. Do not use a conditioner or a hair detangler for two weeks after treatment, it will coat the hair and interfere with Nix.
- Pour 2 ounces (full bottle or 60 ml) of Nix into damp hair. People with long/thick hair may need to use 2 bottles.
- Work the crème into all the hair down to the roots.
- If needed, add a little warm water to work up a lather.
- Leave the anti-lice crème in for a full 10 minutes. If you don't, it won't kill all the lice. Then rinse the hair well with water and dry it with a towel.
- Repeat the anti-lice crème in 7-9 days. Two treatments with anti-lice crème is always needed, otherwise the lice will come back. The second treatment will kill any new lice that have hatched from eggs.

3 Remove the Dead Nits:

- Removing the dead nits is not essential or urgent. However, it prevents others from thinking your child still has untreated lice.
- Nits (lice eggs) do not spread lice. Live lice spread lice. Most treated nits (lice eggs) are dead after the first treatment with Nix. The others will be killed with the 2nd treatment.
- Nits can be removed by backcombing with a special nit comb.
- You can also pull them out one at a time, but will take a lot of time.
- Wetting the hair with water makes removal easier. Avoid any products that claim they loosen the nits it may interfere with the anti-lice crème.

4 Hair washing Precautions to Help Nix Work:

- After anti-lice treatment do not wash the hair with shampoo for 2 days.
- Avoid hair conditioners before treatment. Do not use hair conditioner for 2 weeks after anti-lice treatment it coats the hair and interferes with Nix.

5 Treating Close Contacts:

- Check each member of the household for lice. If lice or nits are seen, they should be treated with anti-lice crème as directed.
- Anyone in the household with an itchy scalp rash should be treated.
- Bedmates of children with lice should also be treated additionally. If in doubt, have your child checked for lice.

6 Returning to School:

- Be sure to tell the school nurse or office staff when returning to school after treatment.
- Lice are spread by close contact, such as hugging or sharing personal items. They cannot jump or fly.
- Your child can return to school after 1 treatment with the anti-lice shampoo and no live lice.
- A child with nits doesn't need to miss any school.
- Remind your child not to share combs, hats or other personal belongings.

7 Cleaning the House - Preventing Spread:

- Avoid close contact with others until after the first anti-lice treatment.
- Lice that are off the body rarely cause infection. Lice can't live for more than 24 hours off the human body.
- Vacuum your child's room.
- Soak hairbrushes for 1 hour in a solution containing anti-lice shampoo.
- Wash your child's sheets, blankets, and pillowcases daily. Wash any clothes worn in the past 2 days. Wash in hot water (130° F or 54° C) this kills lice and nits.
- Items that can't be washed (hats, coats, or scarves) should be set aside. Put them in sealed plastic bags for 2 weeks, this is the longest period that nits can survive.

8 What to Expect:

- With 2 treatments, all lice and nits should be killed. Make sure the Nix is repeated in 7-9 days. If you don't, the lice may come back.
- If lice come back, it can mean another contact with an infected person. It can also be that the shampoo wasn't left on for 10 minutes. It may also mean that hair conditioner was used.

9 Call Your Doctor If:

- New lice or nits are seen in the hair after 2 treatments with anti-lice shampoo. Prescription strength anti-lice crème may be prescribed by your physician.
- Scalp rash or itch that lasts more than 1 week after the anti-lice treatment.
- Sores on scalp start to spread or look infected.
- Your child becomes worse, or you think your child may need to be seen.

Please remember, contact your doctor if your child develops any of the 'Call Your Doctor' symptoms.

Disclaimer: This information is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice. It is provided for educational purposes only. You assume full responsibility for how you choose to use this information.

Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/head/schools.html>

<https://www.nasn.org/nasn/programs/educational-initiatives/lice-lessons>

<http://www.swpediatrics.com/Medical-Information/Is-Your-Child-Sick/Is-Your-Child-Sick/Lice-Head.aspx>