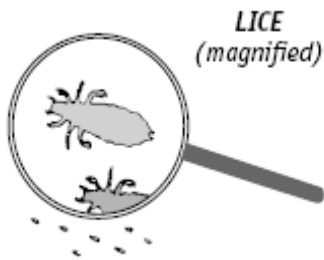


HEAD LICE FACT SHEET

What are Head Lice?

- Head Louse is an insect that lives and breeds on your head. Head lice feed themselves by biting into the scalp. As many as 12 million people worldwide get head lice each year
- having head lice (pediculosis) is common; it is experienced by as many as 12 million people worldwide.



Who can get Head Lice?

- anyone coming into close head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice can get head lice
- head lice are found most often among children between the ages of 3 and 10 years of age, and their families
- girls get head lice more often than boys and women more than men

How do I know if I have Head Lice?

- can experience a tickling feeling of something moving in the hair
- can be accompanied by itching, caused by an allergic reaction to the bites irritability
- sores on the head caused by scratching; the sores can sometimes become infected

How do you get Head Lice?

- Head lice is contracted mostly due to close head-to-head contact with someone who already has head lice. Contact is common during play at school and at home (slumber parties, sports activities, at camp, on a playground, etc.)
- through the use of sharing hats, scarves, combs, brushes, hair ribbons, pillows or towels recently used by someone with head lice

What do they look like?

- insects are tiny, wingless, move quickly, and are difficult to see
- lice cannot jump or fly
- lice are 1–2 mm long and grayish brown in colour.
- there are three stages of lice: the nit, the nymph and the adult



What Are Nits?

1. Nits are head lice eggs.
2. Nits are hard to see and are often confused with dandruff or hair spray droplets
3. Nits are found firmly attached to the hair shaft.
4. Nits are oval and usually yellow to white. Nits take about 1 week to hatch

What is a Nymph?

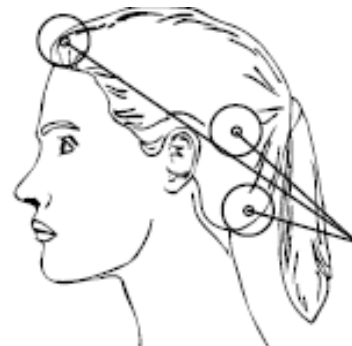
1. The nit hatches into a baby louse called a Nymph.
2. A Nymph looks like an adult head louse, but is smaller.
3. Nymphs mature into adults about 7 days after hatching.
4. In order to live, the nymph must feed on blood.

What Is An Adult Louse?

1. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has 6 legs, and his tan to greyish-white.
2. Females lay nits; they are usually larger than males.
3. Adult lice can live up to 30 days on a person's head.
4. To live, adult lice need to feed on blood.
5. If a louse falls off a person, it dies within 2 days.

How Are Head Lice Treated?

- Many products are available to treat head lice.
- Speak to your pharmacist prior to buying any products
- Talking to your doctor is always favourable before treating children under 2 years of age, a person with a seizure disorder, or anyone with a scalp infection.
- purchase a head lice shampoo or cream
rinse from a drug store
- Apply the product following instructions carefully.
- Head lice products kill the head lice and many eggs, but one treatment may not kill all the eggs.



Commonly found around ears, forehead and nape of neck. Lie close to scalp.

- Apply a second treatment 7 – 10 days after the first treatment to kill any newly hatched lice before they mature.

- Remove all the nits by using fingernails or a nit comb to drag each nit down the hair shaft.

- It is suggested that you limit shampoo use, or not shampoo, between the two treatments and in the week following the second treatment. This will likely allow the head lice product to work more effectively.
- Check the head daily between treatments to remove any nits that are still present. Use a bright light to help you see. Carefully check all sections of the head to remove all nits.

What if a baby has Head Lice?

- Call your family doctor or The Motherisk Program at *The Hospital for Sick Children* at 416-813-6780 for advice before choosing a treatment product. If pregnant and treating others, wear plastic or rubber gloves.

Do I need to clean my house?

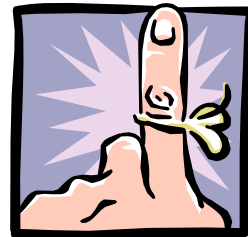
- You must wash hats, scarves, hairbrushes, combs, or any other item that is worn or used on the head, as well as pillowcases, towels and bed linens after the first and second treatment in very hot soapy water. Items that cannot be machine-washed should be dry cleaned or placed in an airtight bag for 10 days to two weeks.
- Excessive house cleaning is not necessary, but it may be advisable to vacuum surfaces where heads have rested (e.g. sofas, seats of cars and helmets). Do not use insecticide sprays.

How can I control the spread of Head Lice?

- Discourage head-to-head contact and sharing of hats, scarves, hairbrushes and combs.
- Tie long hair back in braids.
- Check the heads of all family members and people in close contact in case someone else has head lice.
- All family members with head lice should be treated at the same time.
- Tell all close contacts of the person with head lice to check their head. As well, tell the child's teacher and/or daycare worker.
- You cannot prevent head lice by using head lice shampoos or products
- Use them only if you have head lice.
- Check young school age children regularly for head lice; more often if there is an outbreak.

Important Points To Remember

1. **Be sensitive to your child's feelings!**
2. Lack of cleanliness does not cause head lice.
3. Both children and adults can get head lice.
4. Short hair does not prevent the spread of lice.
5. Head lice do not live on dogs, cats or other animals.



For more information, contact the Simcoe County District Health Unit's Health Connection Line at (705) 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.