



# In Search of Head Lice

*How to find them! How to get rid of them!*



## The problem of head lice

Head lice are small, flat, wingless insects with stubby antennae and 3 pair of legs.

They live on the human scalp and feed on human blood. They need human body warmth and moisture to survive.

Adult head lice live from 16 to 30 days. They grow from tiny nits (eggs) up to 1/8 inch in length. While feeding, the lice inject saliva into the scalp, which causes inflammation and itching.



Head lice are easily passed among people who live or sleep together. Children are most apt to get head lice from brothers or sisters, friends or classmates. The lice pass from head to head on objects such as combs, hats, or clothing, as well as bedding and pillows.

## How to check for head lice

Check for lice if your children are scratching their heads a lot. Check if you know of others close to you or your family who have head lice. To be sure your child has head lice, have your child checked by a doctor, clinic or school nurse.

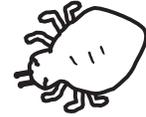
**At home:** Check all people who live in the same house.

**At school:** Check all the children in the classroom, or who ride the bus together.

### **Look for the following:**

- Nits on the hair look like tiny oval objects glued to the side of hair shafts. They are about the size of a grain of sand.
- Lice and nits are usually found in the scalp where the hair is thickest, especially behind the ears and around the nape of the neck. Lice avoid the light.
- Fecal specs can sometimes be seen on the collar, especially if the hair is long, the collar is light, and there are a lot of lice.
- Nits are fixed tightly to the hair shaft, whereas flakes of dandruff will fall easily from the hair.

Enlarged diagram of nit glued to hair shaft



## How to treat head lice

Treat only the people in the home who actually have head lice. To treat effectively, follow these steps:

1. Wash hair with a medicine or shampoo made for treating lice. You can ask your doctor or school nurse for advice, or check with your pharmacy. Some pharmacies have their own generic brands, which may cost a little less. All of these products have the name of the active ingredient listed on the package.

Be sure to follow the directions exactly as they are written. Different products may have different instructions.

2. After treating with the lice-killing product, comb out all remaining lice and nits with a fine-toothed comb made for this purpose. These combs are sold in the pharmacy along with the lice shampoo. Sometimes they come packaged in a kit with the shampoo.
3. Clean combs and brushes of all hair, then wash these items in hot water with detergent. You can also soak all combs, brushes and hair ornaments such as barrettes in rubbing alcohol for 24 hours.
4. Recheck the scalp for lice and nits after 11 days. If lice or nits are found, repeat the treatment.

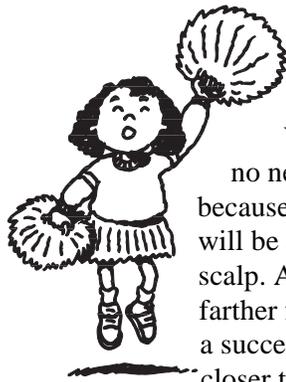
**The itching may not stop for several days after treatment, even though all the lice and nits are dead.**

### Note:

Head lice can become resistant to lice-killing products. If the treatment does not work, read the label to be certain you followed the directions carefully. If you followed all the directions, the lice may be resistant to that product. Try another product with a different active ingredient.

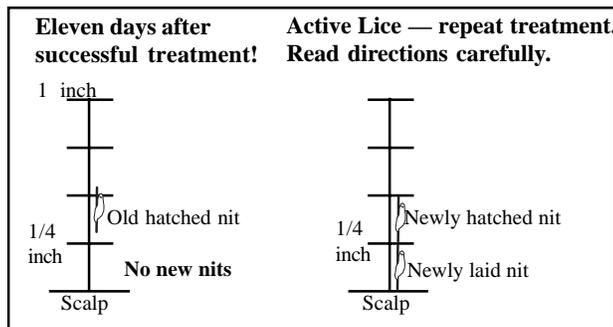
## How to treat objects that may contain head lice

- Wash clothing, sheets, blankets and towels with detergent in hot water (140°F) for 20 minutes. If the item cannot be washed, have it dry-cleaned or store it in a plastic bag for 30 days. You can also put clothing or other fabric items you cannot wash into a clothes dryer on a hot cycle (150°) for 20 minutes.
- Vacuum rugs and furniture. Also vacuum fabric car seats. Empty the vacuum cleaner bag when you are finished.
- You can buy a lice spray for furniture, but it may not work well. If you do use such a product, spray only on furniture or beds, **NEVER** on people.



### Successful treatment

When all lice and nits are dead, no new nits will be laid. You can tell because when nits are first laid, they will be attached to the hair near the scalp. As the hair grows, they will be farther from the scalp. By 11 days after a successful treatment, no nits will be closer than one-quarter inch from the scalp.



## How to stop the spread of head lice



- Watch for the signs of lice at home and at school. Check if a child is scratching often.
- Try to keep children from sharing combs, brushes, hats, coats, towels, exercise mats, etc.
- Do not hang hats and coats on the same hooks with other childrens' clothing.
- If your child has lice, tell other people who need to know, such as the school nurse, teacher, or friend's parent.

### Keeping children from school

- Do not send children back to school until their hair has been treated correctly with a lice-killing product and all nits have been combed out of the hair.
- Check with your school nurse before sending your child back to school.

### Some wrong ideas about head lice

- Head lice are not a sign of being dirty. Clean people can get head lice.
- Head lice don't usually spread any other diseases.
- Head lice cannot jump or fly from one person to another.
- Head lice do not come from dogs, cats or other pets.
- Head lice do not live long in carpets and on furniture. These items do not give the lice enough warmth, food, or moisture for them to survive.
- No solvent such as vinegar, etc. will dissolve the glue that holds the nits to the hair.



**Head lice are spread when people share hats, brushes and combs.**



**For more information,  
call  
(619) 515-6620.**

