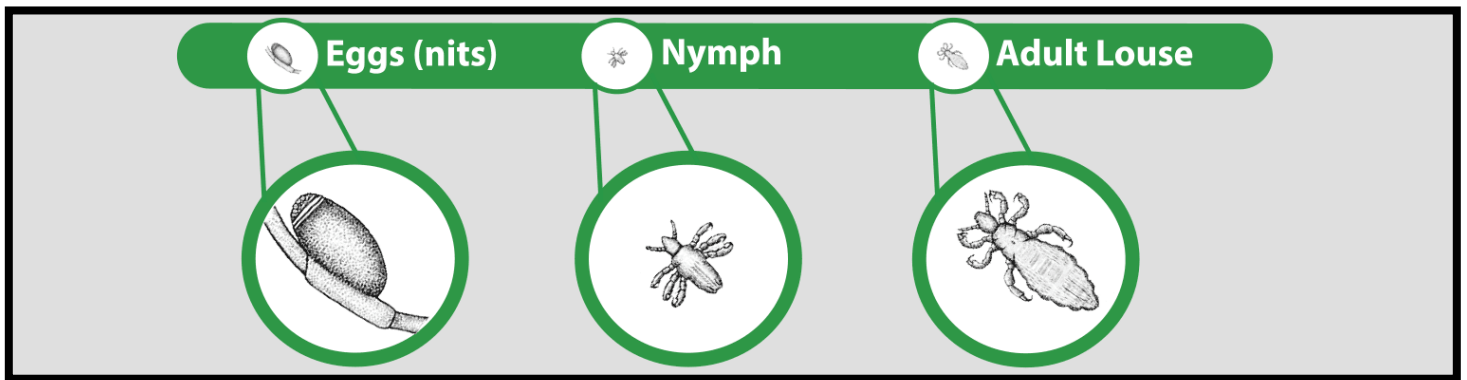


# HEAD LICE



Head lice spreads easily, especially when people are in close contact and sharing personal items. One of the first signs of head lice is an itchy scalp.

Here is some information to help you deal with head lice.

## What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny wingless insects (about the size of a sesame seed) that vary in colour but are often grey to light brown. Lice lay eggs that are called nits. Nits stick to the hair shaft, within a  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch from the scalp, and take about one week to hatch into adult lice.

## How do people get head lice?

Head lice are spread through direct contact among people, for example heads touching, or indirectly, such as through sharing hats, combs, clothes, scarves, barrettes, helmets, etc. Lice cannot jump or fly but they can crawl very quickly.

## Where do you find lice on a person's head?

Lice are commonly found around the ears, forehead, and neck. Having head lice does not mean that someone is dirty or unclean. Head lice do not have a preference for clean or dirty hair. Head lice feed on blood from a person's scalp and the warmth of their head.

## Can you get sick from head lice?

No, head lice do not cause disease.

## What are the symptoms of head lice?

A person may be infested with head lice and not experience symptoms. The most common signs of head lice are:

- tickling and the sensation of movement,
- itching, and
- sores on the scalp because of scratching.



## What should I do if I think my child has head lice?

- Search your child's head for head lice in a brightly lit space.
- Part the hair in small sections from side to side beginning at the base of the hair around the ears and across the back of the neck moving upwards until the whole head has been examined.
- Recheck your child's head after one to two weeks.



## What should I do if my child has head lice?

1. Treat your child's hair with an over-the-counter pesticide to kill lice so that they cannot continue to lay eggs. Talk with a pharmacist to decide which shampoo to use. Always follow the instructions on the label. **Treatment should be repeated in 7-10 days to kill any lice that hatched since the last treatment.** Do not use the same medication more than two to three times if the treatment is unsuccessful. Home remedies should be avoided.
2. Remove nits using a nit comb or by pinching them between your fingers and sliding them off of the hair shaft. After each treatment continue to check your child's head daily for new nits.
3. Wash clothing, bedding, and towels that were recently used using your laundry machine's hottest setting. Laundry should be dried on high heat for at least 15 minutes. Place items that cannot be washed, such as stuffed animals and pillows, in a tightly sealed plastic bag for two weeks.
4. Soak all family combs and brushes for at least 10 minutes in hot water.

## How can I prevent head lice?

- Regularly check your child's hair for lice.
- Teach children to avoid head-to-head contact with other children, to not share hats, helmets, combs, headphones, or scarves with others, and to not lie on beds, couches, pillows, carpets, or stuffed animals that have recently been in contact with an infected person.
- Notify your child's school if your child has head lice. The school has an important role in implementing preventative measures in the classroom.