

Recommended Head Lice Management



**Interior Health
December 2010**

Head Lice Facts

- Head lice do not spread disease.
- Anyone can get them.
- They only live on a person's head and can only survive 1-2 days away from the scalp.
- They do not jump or fly.



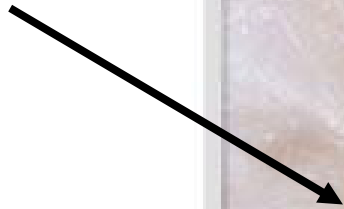
What Are They?



- Lice are tiny flat insects about the size of a sesame seed
- They live on the human scalp and feed on human blood.
- Grey or Light to Darker Brown in color.
- Lay eggs (nits) on the base of the hair shaft, very close to the scalp (1/4 inch).

What Do They Look Like?

Nymph



Adult



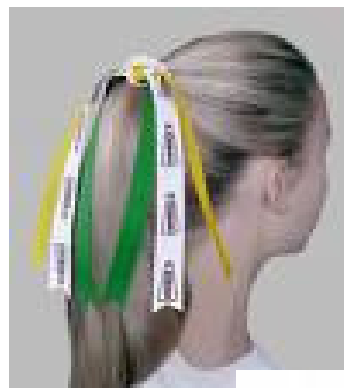


How are they spread?

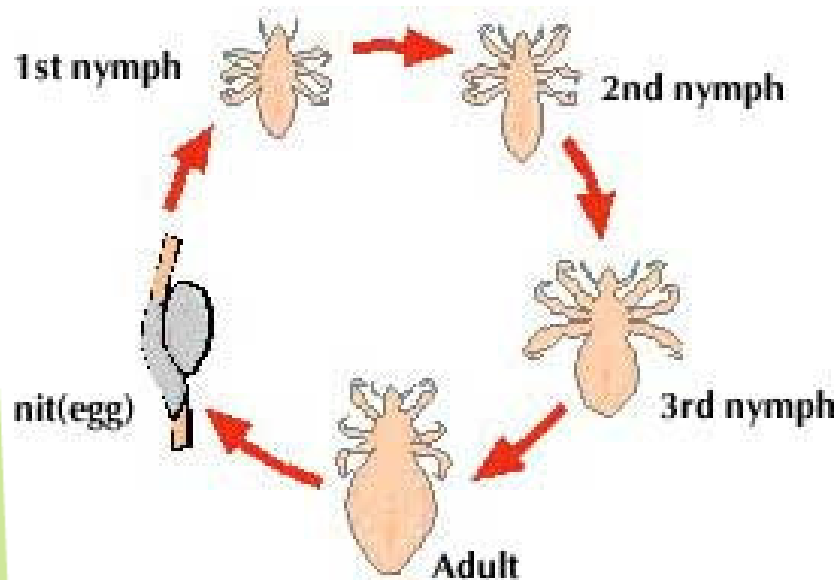


- Through direct head-to-head contact.
- Can be spread via combs, towels, clothes, hats, hair accessories and bedding.
- Common where children play or work closely together.

Can Spread Indirectly via Items that Come In Contact w/ the Person's Head



Life Cycle



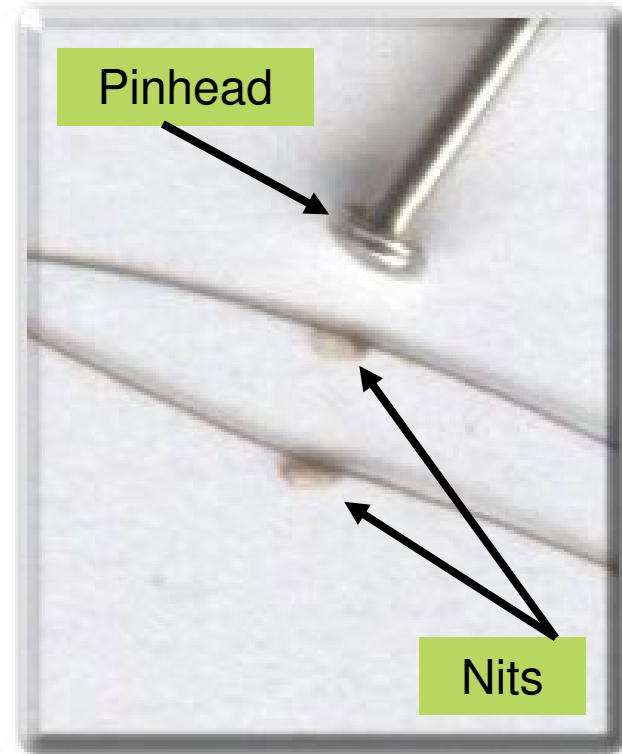
- Egg to Adult ~ 21-27 days
- Each adult female deposits 50 – 150 nits in her lifetime.
- Nits (eggs) hatch in 7 – 10 days.
- Nymphs take 7 – 10 days before becoming an adult.
- Nymphs & Adults feed on blood several x/day.
- Adults live 30-40 days.



Live Nits



- Smaller than a pin head
- White, grey, light or dark brown
- Tear-drop shaped
- Are glued very close to scalp (within 6mm or 1/4")
- Can be mistaken for dandruff (dandruff comes off hair easily)



Another Size Comparison





Symptoms

- Tickling or feeling of something moving in the hair.
- Itchy scalp caused by head lice bites.
- Sores or marks on the head caused by scratching (these can sometimes become infected)
- Irritability!
- Some people have no symptoms.

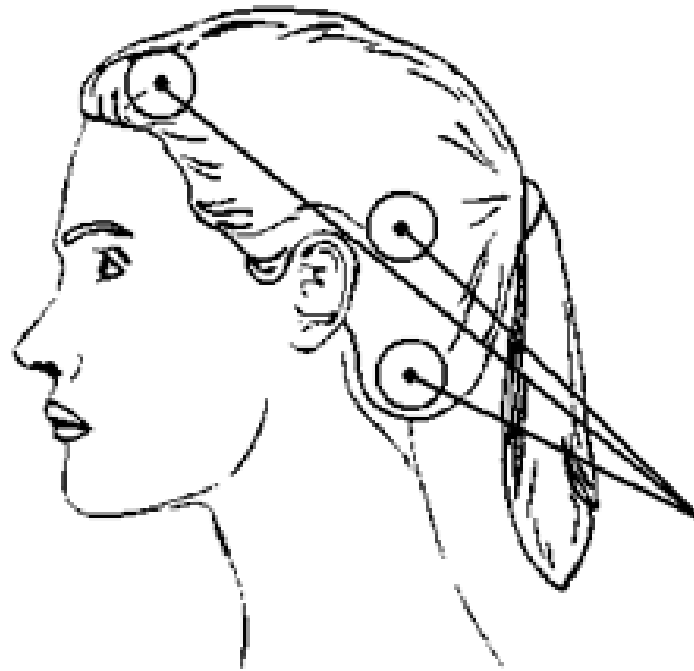


Checking for Head Lice and Nits



- Ensure all personal hair, jewelry & clothing are out of the way.
- Position child at eye level beside a bright light source.
- Check the entire head, carefully looking close to the scalp.
- Live lice move very quickly. Combing hair with a fine-toothed nit comb can help find live lice. *Wetting hair prior to combing may also help find live lice*

Common Sites Where Nits Are Found

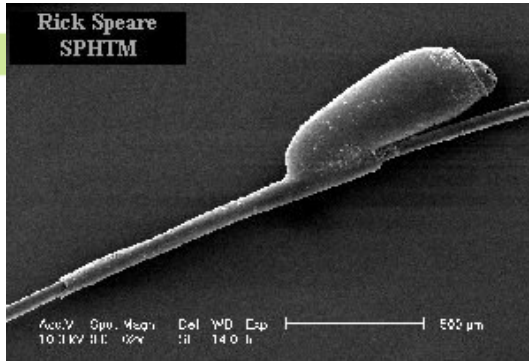


Commonly found around ears, forehead and nape of neck. Lie close to scalp.

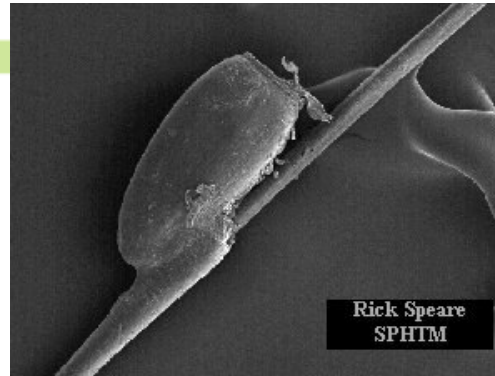
**Treatment is Advised Only if
Lice or Live Nits are Found**



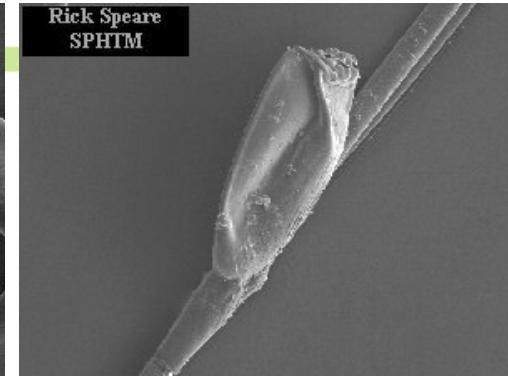
State of Nits



↑
Alive – glued to hair
within ¼” of scalp



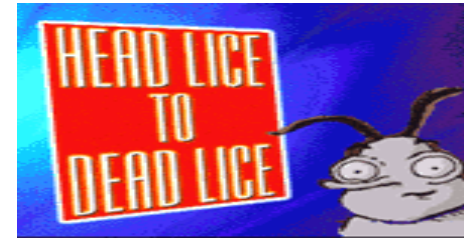
↑
Hatched – can be
moved; greater than ¼”
from scalp



↑
Dead – can be
moved; are greater
than ¼” from scalp

Hatched or Dead Nits are not an Issue

Treatment



- Check all family members.
- Only family members with live head lice or live nits should be treated.
- Having head lice once does not protect someone from getting it again.
- Keep head lice products out of the reach of young children.

TREATMENT OPTIONS



Option A:

Head Lice Shampoo- Creams-Rinses

(Kill the Head Lice & Remove
the Nits within 1/4" of scalp)

Special head lice products are
used because they have
been tested & determined
to be a safe & effective
treatment.



Option B:

Wet-Combing

(Remove the Head
Lice & forget
the nits)

A non-chemical
way to find &
eliminate
head lice.

Pregnant/Breastfeeding Women/Infants (Head Lice Shampoos-Creams-Rinses)



- Cannot be used on infants
- Pregnant or nursing mothers should only use head lice products following advice from their physician



OPTION 'A'

(Head Lice Shampoo-Creams-Rinses)



- Uses 2 applications of a special head lice shampoo, cream or rinse
- 7 to 10 days apart
- Products available without a prescription at any pharmacy
- Kills the lice on the head, but may not kill the nits.
- Nits need to be removed using a special 'nit comb' or with your fingers.



OPTION 'A'

(Head Lice Shampoo-Creams-Rinses)



- Check the heads of all family members.
- Only family members with live head lice or live nits should be treated.
- Carefully read and follow directions of the head lice product.
- Remove nits (within ¼" of scalp).
- **Wash** clothing worn in past 2-3 days, bed sheets & pillow cases and then **Dry** in HOT cycle of the dryer.



OPTION 'A'

(Head Lice Shampoo-Creams-Rinses)



- Treat a 2nd time in 7-10 days.
- A child should be able to return to school after 1st treatment.
- Do not use conditioners for 1 week following treatment.
- If new lice or new nits are found, consult your Public Health Nurse or try OPTION 'B'



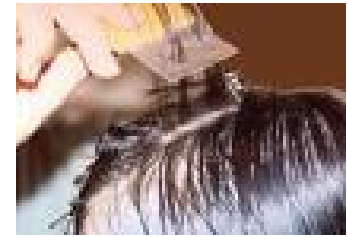
OPTION 'B' (Wet-Combing)



- Wet combing is based on the life cycle of head lice.
- It focuses on removing the live head lice & does not require removing the nits from the head.
- Combing treatments are done every 3-4 days over a 2-wk period. This breaks the life cycle of lice by removing them before they are fully-grown & able to reproduce.



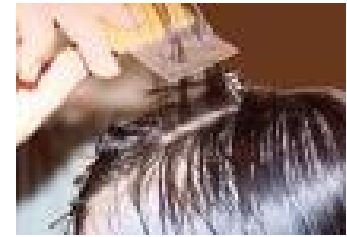
OPTION 'B' (Wet-Comb)



- Wash hair with ordinary shampoo & rinse.
- Apply at least ½ cup of a conditioner to saturate the hair. Do not rinse out.
- Comb sections of the hair using a metal 'nit comb'.
- Firmly draw the comb from scalp to end of hair.
- Rinse the comb in a sink or bowl of warm water & wipe dry.
- Continue until entire head is done.
- Keep hair wet with conditioner.



OPTION 'B' (Wet-Combing)



- Rinse hair. Leave dripping wet. Repeat combing without conditioner, until no lice are found.
- Repeat every 3-4 days for 2 weeks. All 4 sessions must be done.
- A child should be able to return to school after 1st combing.
- After 2 weeks, if lice are found, talk to your Public Health Nurse or try OPTION 'A' .



OPTION 'B'

Days to Wet Comb



1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14



Re-Infestation



- If a child has head lice a 2nd time, consult your Public Health Nurse to review treatment options.

To Clean or Not to Clean?

- On the day treatment is started, wash clothing worn in past 2-3 days, bed sheets and pillowcases and then dry in HOT cycle of the dryer.
- Items that can't be washed can be placed in a plastic bag for 10 days or in the freezer x 48 hours.
- Don't forget combs, brushes and hair elastics.
- There is no evidence that a major cleaning of the house or car is necessary.



If parents have limited time, it is more effective to spend it combing hair than washing linens, clothes & vacuuming

Dangerous Remedies

Do Not Use – Not Effective &/or Not Safe

- Insect Sprays (Raid)
- Oil (WD40)
- Gasoline
- Flea Soap
- Alcohol
- Shaving Gel

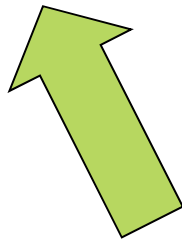


- Dyes
- Bleaches
- Chinese Chalk
- Heat Applied to Scalp
- Enzyme Reactions
- Kerosene
- Garlic

Essential Oils (Pine, Tea Tree, Thyme, Rosemary, Eucalyptus, etc.) are not recommended at this time due to limited data & possible toxicity.



Control of Head Lice



- Head Lice can best be controlled through the cooperation of parents, children, school & health professionals.



Control of Head Lice

Parents



- Be aware of symptoms of head lice and treatment procedures.
- Check the heads of all family members on a weekly basis.
- Treat the infested heads.

More information

- Recommended Head Lice Management (December 2010)
- Interior Health School Health Website
<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/choose-health.aspx?id=170>