

# Key Facts Head Lice



- Lice are parasitic insects that can be seen with the naked eye.
- They live on the scalp, eyebrows, & eyelashes and feed on human blood.
- While they can crawl, lice do not jump or fly and do not commonly spread disease. Spread commonly from head-to-head contact in close proximity or via shared items such as: brushes, hats, bedding, helmets, or towels.
- 6-12 million infestations occur in the USA each year, primarily in children.
- Head lice are specific to humans and do not come from pets.
- Infestation does not reflect poor personal or home hygiene.

## Identification and Diagnosis

**NIT:** Eggs found at the base of the hair shaft near the scalp. Easily confused with dandruff or hair spray droplets.

**NYMPH:** Recent hatchling, actively feed on blood.

**ADULT:** Size of a sesame seed with 6 legs and range from tan to grey in color.



### Signs & Symptoms

- “Tickling” sensation or itchiness of the scalp
- Head sores due to scratching
- Irritability
- Difficulty sleeping

### Diagnosis

1. Use a magnifying glass and/or fine tooth comb, focused near the scalp.
2. Self-diagnose by seeing live lice and/or nits. Seeing only nits may be from a past infestation.
3. Have healthcare provider confirm diagnosis.

# Treatment & Care Head Lice



- Head lice cases do not need to be reported to the Health Department.
- Schools create their own lice policies. Check with your school for exclusion rules.
- Treatment is recommended for anyone showing active infestation, and all household members or close contacts should be checked for infestation.
- All exposed bedding should be washed/dried at the hottest possible setting (*minimum of 128°F*), drycleaned, or sealed in a plastic bag for two weeks.
- All combs and brushes can be soaked in very hot water for 10 minutes.



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- OTC and prescription medications are available
- Follow instructions exactly
- Retreatment may be needed to kill all life stages
  - Pediculicides kill nymph and adult lice
  - Ovicides kill nits and eggs
- Those with long, thick hair may need multiple treatment boxes.



## If 8-12 hours after treatment:

- Lice are dead or alive but moving slower ➔ **Do not retreat**
- Lice are active and none are dead ➔ **Speak to your doctor**
  - Alternative treatment options may be needed



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Rinse treatment out in sink, not shower, to reduce skin exposure.

Continue to check hair and scalp for 2-3 weeks post-treatment.

Do not re-wash hair for 1-2 days after treatment is applied.