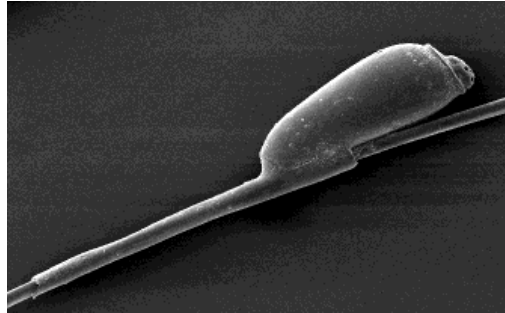


Frequently Asked Questions About Head Lice

The information below has been obtained from the website of The National Pediculosis Association, Inc.: <http://www.headlice.org/>

This seems to be a great site for practical information regarding head lice.

R. Wardie – Defer Elementary School Principal



Nit on hair

Q: How are head lice spread?

A: Head lice can be spread whenever there is direct contact of the head or hair with an infested individual. Lice can also be spread through the sharing of personal articles like hats, towels, brushes, helmets, hair ties, etc. There is also a possibility of spreading head lice via a pillow, headrest or similar items.

Head lice do not have hind legs to hop or jump. They also do not have wings and cannot fly. Head lice do not jump or fly and generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host.

Q: What product should I use to treat my child?

A: There are no over-the-counter or prescription treatments to kill lice that are totally safe and scientifically proven to be 100% effective against head lice and nits. These treatments are potentially harmful pesticides and reliance on them promotes repeated use and contributes to ongoing infestations, outbreaks and resistant strains of head lice.

Various "natural" remedies are vigorously marketed on the Internet but we have found no scientific basis for their claims of efficacy and human safety.

Manual removal of the live lice and nits is the safe alternative and a necessary component of any head lice treatment regimen. The NPA recommends the LiceMeister® Comb to enable families to screen often, detect head lice early and thoroughly remove lice and nits.

Q: How do you treat a home or school for head lice?

A: Homes or schools don't get head lice – people do. Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals or car seats – wherever someone with head lice may have rested their head. Pesticidal sprays are unwarranted and may pose personal and environmental hazards. Vacuum and save your time and energy for what benefits you the most – thorough nit removal.

Q: Do I have to treat everyone in the house?

A: Use a nit-removal comb to check everyone. Even if lice are found on an individual, careful consideration should be given before deciding to use a lice killing treatment because each person has unique health vulnerabilities. Lice treatment products are potentially hazardous to health and should not be used "just in case" a child or family member has lice or in an effort to prevent them.

Q: Do I need to spray my furniture and bedding?

A: Head lice are human parasites and require human blood to survive. They are not environmental pests so pesticidal sprays for furniture and bedding are unnecessary and a serious risk to health. Vacuuming is the safest and best way to remove lice or fallen hairs with attached nits from upholstered furniture, rugs, stuffed animals and cars.

Q: Do I have to bag stuffed animals and other items?

A: Experts used to suggest bagging items such as stuffed animals for a number of weeks to help bring infestations under control. Since lice cannot survive without human blood, this is unnecessary. Vacuuming is a sufficient safeguard for any questionable areas or items that may be in contact with those who are infested. You can also put bed linens, stuffed animals and other items in a dryer for 30 minutes.

Save your physical and emotional energies for screening and thorough lice and nit removal.

Q: Can you catch head lice from headphones or helmets?

A: The extent to which head lice are transmitted to others via headphones or helmets is unknown. Ideally, risk of transmission can be eliminated by making sure children have and use their own equipment. If this is not possible, you can clean the items between children by wiping them with a damp paper towel. An additional measure would be to encourage each child to wear a baseball cap to help shield the hair from contact with the item. Helmets and headphones should never be sprayed.

Most importantly – and best for the entire community – all parents should screen their children regularly.

Q: How can I tell if the nits are dead or alive?

A: Children, like adults, do not want nits in their hair – dead or alive. The time it would take to make the distinction is time far better spent removing ALL the nits. Finding 10 dead nits guarantees nothing for the 11th.

Q: How long can nits and lice survive off of a human head?

A: Once laid, it takes 7-10 days for a nit to hatch. Nits off the head may not even hatch at all as they are laid close to scalp because they need human warmth to incubate. A nit hatching off of a head results in tiny nymph head louse which, without an accessible/nearby human, is doomed because it requires an immediate blood meal.

Adult head lice off of their human hosts will generally not survive for more than 24 hours.

Q: What is the life cycle of the head louse?

A: Head lice can survive on a human host for approximately 30 days. They generally cannot survive longer than 24 hours off the host.

A female louse lays 3-5 eggs a day. The eggs hatch in 7-10 days and it takes another 7-10 day for the louse to mature and lay their own eggs.