

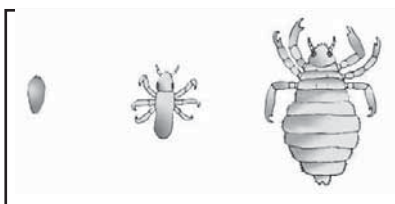
# HEADLICE

**HEAD LICE** are tiny insects that live on the scalp, where they lay their eggs. Head lice do not spread disease but they can cause a lot of stress in a family.

## WHAT DO HEAD LICE LOOK LIKE?

Lice have 3 stages:

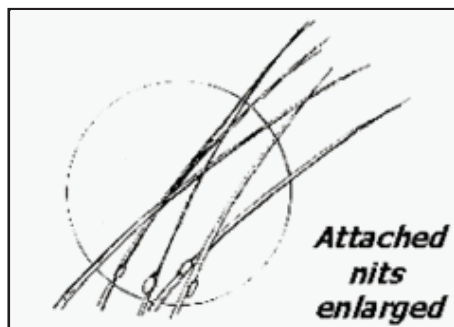
- egg (nit)
- nymph
- adult



**NITS** are about the size of a grain of sand. They can be gray or tan in colour. They stick to the hair and cannot be brushed off easily. Newly laid nits are very close to the scalp. Empty nit shells stay stuck to the hair and are found further away from the scalp. Nits hatch in 7 to 10 days.

**NYMPHS** are baby lice. They look like adults but are smaller. They become an adult after 7 days.

**ADULT** lice are the size of a sesame seed and difficult to see. They can live for up to 30 days on the scalp, but die within 3 days away from the scalp. They move very quickly and hide in the hair.



[http://www.toronto.ca/health/hl\\_index.htm#signs](http://www.toronto.ca/health/hl_index.htm#signs)

## HOW DO LICE SPREAD?

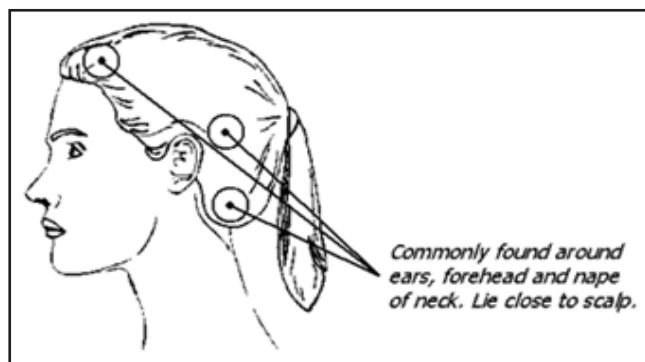
Head lice go from person to person; they do not live on animals. They are common among school-aged children or children attending child care.

Head Lice spread through direct head to head contact or indirectly by sharing hats, combs, hairbrushes, pillows, headphones or helmets.

Head lice crawl very quickly, they do not fly or hop. One of the first signs of head lice is an itchy scalp.

## HOW DO YOU CHECK FOR HEAD LICE?

- Use good lighting.
- To look for the nits (eggs), part the hair in small sections.
- Start checking near the scalp at the bottom of the neck and behind the ears.



[http://www.toronto.ca/health/hl\\_index.htm#signs](http://www.toronto.ca/health/hl_index.htm#signs)

- Continue checking until you go over the whole head. You may see the adult lice or nymphs as you move the hair.
- If you think you have found a nit, try to brush it off with your hand. If it does not brush off easily and it needs to slide down the entire length of the hair strand, it is likely a nit.

# HEADLICE

Head lice spread easily in a family. Check everyone who has stayed in your home for head lice and treat only the people who have head lice. It is a good idea to check your child's head weekly for head lice.

## HOW ARE HEAD LICE TREATED?

There are many products available to treat head lice. Head lice products are behind the counter at the drug store and you must ask for them. If you are pregnant, nursing a baby or if a toddler under 2 years has head lice, contact your doctor or call Motherisk {416-813-6780} for advice.

### **Approved products for treating head lice in Canada:**

- **Pyrethrin** (ex. R & C Shampoo & Conditioner)
- **Permethrin** (ex. Nix Creme Rinse or Kwellada-P Creme Rinse)
- **Lindane** (ex. Hexit Shampoo or PMS-Lindane) Lindane should not be used on children under 2 years of age.
- **Resultz** is a non-insecticidal product approved for use in Canada. It is only to be used in children 4 years of age or older.

Follow the directions on the package carefully. Look to see if it goes on dry or wet hair; some are used after your regular shampoo. Remove all of the nits that you can find and keep checking every day. Even if the label says it kills the eggs/nits, you should remove the nits. Treat again in 7 days with a head lice product. If you find live lice within 2 days of the first treatment, use a different head lice treatment.

## WHAT ABOUT Home Remedies?

Some people use home remedies such as mayonnaise, petroleum jelly, olive oil, vinegar or margarine. Although these products make it hard for lice to breathe, they probably won't kill them. There is no evidence that tea tree oil or aromatherapies are effective.

**NEVER** use gasoline, kerosene or bleach - these products are dangerous.

## What about cleaning MY HOUSE?

Head lice can live up to 3 days off the scalp. Items such as hats, bed linens, blankets and clothing belonging to the infested person(s) must be washed in hot water and dried in a hot dryer for 15 minutes. Items that cannot be machine washed must be put in an airtight bag for 10 days. Vacuum soft surfaces where heads have rested (sofas, seats of cars, helmets).

## SHOULD CHILDREN WITH HEAD LICE STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL?

Schools and Daycares make their own policies about head lice. Research shows that keeping children out of school does not slow the spread of head lice. Children with head lice should be treated and can attend school or child care as usual. Teach your children to avoid head to head contact with other children, not to share combs, hairbrushes, caps, hats and hair ornaments.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

**Motherisk:** 416-813-6780 {a toll free line is not available for this topic}

**Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health**

**Unit:** Health Action Line

1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685

**Website for parents:**

[www.caringforkids.cps.ca](http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca)



*Reference: Head lice infestations: A clinical update. Infectious Diseases and Immunization Committee. Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS). Paediatr Child Health 2008;13(8)692-6 Reference No. ID 2008-06*