



Head Lice

What are head lice?

- Yellowish-white insects that live on the human scalp.
- They are tiny - about 1/8 of an inch long.
- They are hard to see because they are small and move fast.
- Lice don't have wings, and they can't fly, hop, or jump.

What do head lice look like?

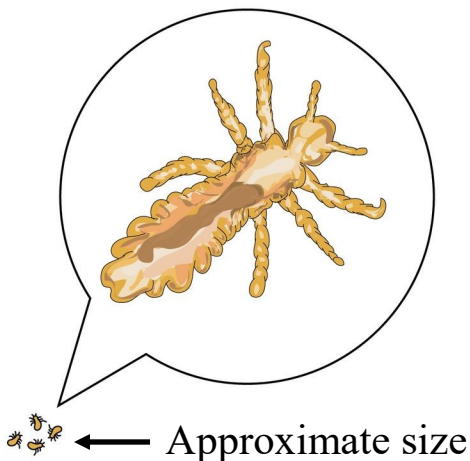
- Nits = Tiny white or yellow oval-shaped head lice eggs that are found attached to the hair shaft. You will often spot nits in hair before you see full-grown lice.
- Nymphs = Baby lice that are smaller than a sesame seed, and feed on human blood.
- Adult = Full-grown lice, about the size of a sesame seed, feed on human blood, and can live up to 30 days.

Where are head lice most commonly found?

- On the scalp
- Behind the ears
- Near the neckline
- Attached to hair

What are the signs and symptoms of head lice?

- Tickling feeling in hair
- Itching, caused by bites
- Irritability and sleeplessness
- Sores on the head from scratching



How do you get head lice?

- Lice are passed from direct personal contact (by head-to-head contact or by sharing combs, hats, or coats) with someone who has lice.
- Lice can live on any person's head - regardless of age, income, social status, or cleanliness.

How is head lice confirmed?

- By looking closely at the scalp and hair for nits (lice eggs), nymphs (baby lice), and adult lice.
- Finding nymphs (baby lice) and adult lice may be hard because they move fast. If you are unsure of the presence of head lice, check with your health care provider, nurse, or a professional from the health department.
- If one person has lice, check the hair of everyone else in your house and only treat those who have live lice, or nits found less than 1/2 inch from the scalp.

Steps to treat head lice:

1. Apply a lice-killing hair product (shampoo or crème rinse). You can find one at a drug store, or contact a health care provider for assistance. Always follow product directions exactly for best results.
2. In an area with good lighting (use a lamp if needed), divide the hair into 1-inch sections.
3. Manually search through each section of hair looking for lice or nits, and remove any that you find.
4. Using a fine-tooth comb, start at the top of the head and comb through the head one section at a time. Remember to remove any lice or nits from the comb after each pass and throw them away.
5. Vacuum and/or wash all contaminated materials such as carpets, sheets, and clothing.
6. After completing the treatment, look at the scalp every 2-3 days for 2-3 weeks.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov
Ohio Department of Health Infectious Disease Control Manual: Pediculosis,
www.odh.ohio.gov
National Pediculosis Association