



Head Lice

What are head lice?

- Parasitic insects that live on the human head
- Also known as *Pediculus humanus capitis* (peh-DICK-you-lus Hue-man-us CAP-ih-tus)

Who is at risk for getting head lice?

- Anyone who comes in contact with contaminated clothing, materials, or an individual who has head lice (ie: hats, scarves, coats, sports uniforms, combs, brushes, beds, carpets, stuffed animals)
- Preschool and elementary children ages 3-10 are most likely to get head lice
- Females are more likely to get lice than males

What do head lice look like?

- Nit: Tiny white or yellow oval-shaped head lice eggs that are found attached to the hair shaft
- Nymph: Baby lice 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 infestation?

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

How is head lice infestation confirmed?

- Closely look through the scalp and hair looking for nits (lice eggs), nymphs (babies), and adult lice
- Finding nymphs (babies) and adult lice may be difficult because they move quickly. If you are unsure of the presence of head lice, check with your health care provider, nurse, or a professional from the health department.

How is a head lice infestation treated?

- Manual removal is an important and effective form of treatment
- A doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider will recommend non-toxic shampoo/wash products that will remove the lice from your scalp and hair
- Vacuum and/or wash all contaminated materials such as carpets, sheets, and clothing
- After completing the treatment recommended by your healthcare provider, re-inspect the scalp every 2-3 days for 2-3 weeks

Facts of Lice

- ◆ Lice cannot fly or jump
- ◆ Their legs are designed to crawl
- ◆ They only spread through physical contact
- ◆ They can't digest anything but human blood
- ◆ While they can be transported by animals, or fall onto carpeting, they can't live more than 2-3 days without feeding

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov
The National Pediculosis Association, Inc, www.headlice.org

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